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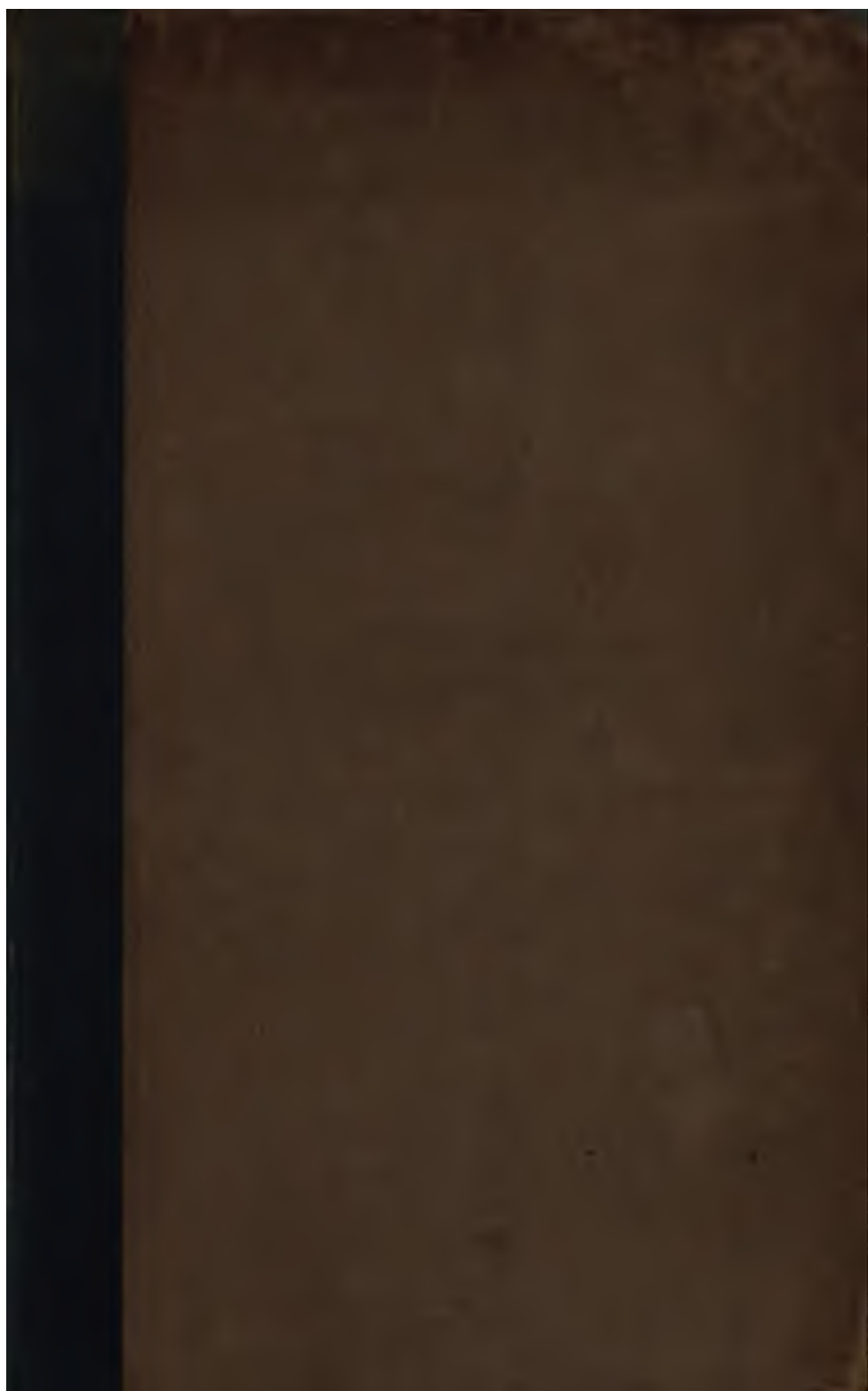
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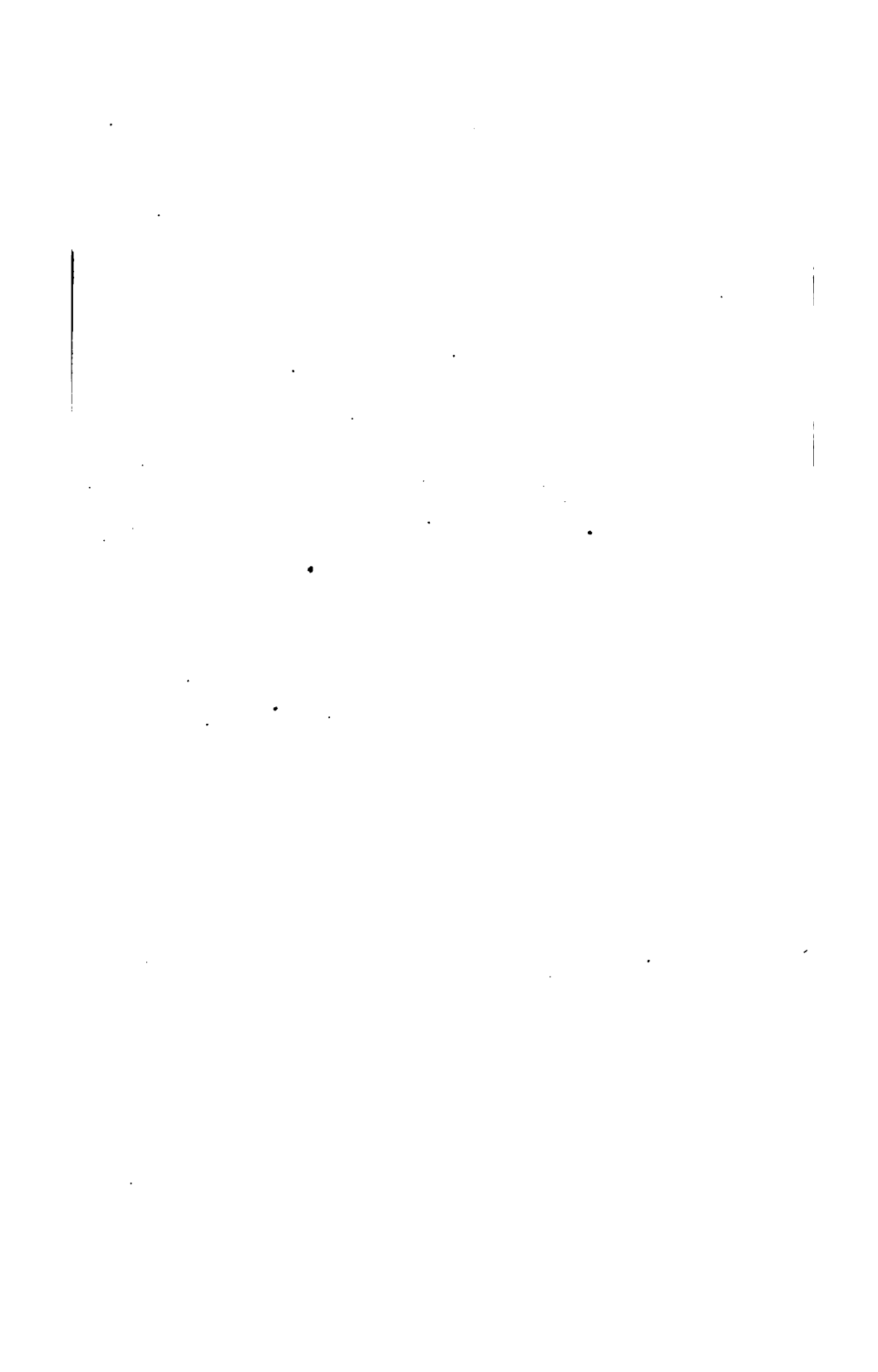
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LORD DACRE OF GILSLAND.

L O R D D A C R E

OF

G I L S L A N D .

A N O V E L .

BY ELIZABETH M. STEWART.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



VOL. III.

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LORD DACRE.

CHAPTER I.

Then Sir George Bowes, straightway he rose,
After them some spoyle to make ;
Those noble earls turned back again,
And aye they vowed that knight to take.

That Baron he to his castle fled,
To Barnard Castle then fled he ;
The uttermost walls were lithe to win,
The earls have won them presentlie.

The uttermost walls were lime and brick,
But though they won them soon, anon ;
Long e'er they won the inmost walls,
For they were cut in rock of stone.

The Rising in the North.
Percy's Ancient Reliques.

THE sunbeam of a December morning, broke feebly through the silvery mists which hung over the beautiful valley of the Tees; but as those mists slowly drew upwards, the landscape appeared in an aspect perhaps even more enchanting, than it would have assumed under the gay dominion of summer.

At intervals, bold masses of rock jutted over the river, in broken and fantastic forms; and these, as the sun darted down upon them, exhibited a rich confusion of colors—tawny, green, olive, and brown, the latter tint deepening at times into a warm crimson glow: and these variegated hues, melted into each other with a softness and harmony of coloring, which the painter might have striven in vain to imitate. Here and there an oak coppice, which had taken root upon the declivity of some less rocky eminence, flung its knotty branches, still hung with russet leaves, over the river, and broke into all the variety of light, and

shade, the red sunbeam which played upon its frozen surface. Height over height these mountains ascended, still guarding all the serpentine windings of the Tees, nor were they even at this season of the year altogether destitute of verdure; clumps of the dark and glittering holly, grew thickly on the more earthy ledges of the rocks, and the ivy flourished not less luxuriantly on the trunks and branches of the old oaks, while huge patches of moss, which is never so fresh as in winter, at times robed the sides of the eminences in a vest of emerald green. Every variety too of lichen flourished about the roots of the trees, and among the rocky cliffs; over the heads of the mountains spread a mantle of clouds, here investing the summit of some tall cliff with a feathery whiteness, and there seeming to pile upon the mountains new masses, sometimes dark and sombre, as though the thunder lurked within their depths, and at

others glowing with the reflected crimson of the wintry sun.

As the sun darted among those steeps, it not only lighted up their obscure recesses, but tinged with rainbow hues the long icicles, which were now pendant on many a rocky peak. The trees, and shrubs too that grew on the lower acclivities, had their boughs and twigs still hung with the delicate hoar frost, which the wind had already swept from those which flourished on the upper cliffs. A slight crust of snow which had fallen on the preceding evening, had also been drifted by the wind from the bolder hills, and settled in white patches among the hollows, contrasted with the vivid coloring of moss, and stone, and trees. While the eye, glancing from the blue, smooth sheet of ice, which now formed the bed of the river, was first arrested as the wind passed over them by the trembling chrystals, of the trees and shrubs, which were yet covered by the rime, whose sparkling frost

work, contrasted with the pure transparent icicles above, and the many hues of the mountains.

Grand and imposing in its beauty was this scene, nor was the majesty of nature alone visible ; the power of art had there testified its sublimity. Noble even, though indistinct, the towers and battlements of a castle, that crowned the steepest of the rocks, were dimly discoverable amid the morning mists. More vast even it might perhaps appear in its obscurity ; lowering amid the vapors, huge, dark, and grand — it seemed to acquire a majesty of bulk from the very shadows which forbade the eye to define its exact proportions. But as the mists rolled from the breasts and summits of the mountains, battlement, and bastion, massy keep, and well defended tower, burst upon the sight with a grandeur not even impaired by the floating shadows which shrouded their magnitude so long. Now too might be observed mounted on the stronghold of the fortress, and

slowly waving to the morning air, the royal standard of England.

This castle hung upon a steep acclivity, ascending abruptly from the bed of the river; eighty perpendicular feet above which rose the rock that supported the citadel: neither the natural nor acquired defences of this castle had however secured it from attack. Sheltered by the unequal ground, the tents of a besieging enemy were clustered upon the rocky banks of the Tees; the bridge over which, conducting to the castle, had been destroyed, and some of the beams which had composed it, were floating down the river, mixed with large masses of the ice, which had been broken near to the beleaguered fortress. Deep furrows too were traceable in the ground, from the balls cast by the canon on the walls of the castle, the outer bulwarks of which had been destroyed by the besiegers. A dry ditch, or covered way, surrounded the inner fortress, and in the camp of the enemy, ladders were preparing,

with which they proposed at night to scale the walls. A sluggish inactivity, the effect either of indifference to their own cause, or of despair, appeared to prevail within the castle.

Meanwhile the preparations for an assault went on among the besiegers; not only as before mentioned, were ladders made ready wherewith to scale the walls, but culverins, and demi-culverins, and falcons, as the ordnance of those days were called, were prepared to second the efforts of those who were to mount the walls; for an attack upon the castle gates had been resolved on, which by distracting the attention of the besieged, might enable the scaling party to effect their object in comparative security.

The day had now somewhat advanced, and the ruddier tints had already begun to pale upon the broken bosom of the mountains. The two leaders of the besiegers stood at the entrance of their camp, and screened by an

overhanging rock, they examined the walls of the castle : at this time the sound of a trumpet at no great distance was borne upon the keen air, and echoed by the many-tongued recesses of the rocks. A few words passed between the leaders, and the word was sent through the camp that the soldiers should stand to their arms. Again the blast of the trumpet was heard, and a few minutes afterward, a banner was seen floating over the brow of a distant hill. The leaders gazed curiously as it approached, and as a parting sunbeam discovered its crimson color, one of those leaders observed to his companion—

“ It is our friend, the noble Dacre, who approaches, I can discern the silver scallop shells on his banner; let us hope that he has in his company the royal Mary herself!”

“ In that hope!” answered Earl Percy, for he and his colleague of Westmoreland, were the besiegers of the castle, “ in that hope I am not too sanguine. I know well the nature

of Leonard Dacre, and utterly impracticable must that enterprise be, in which he could express such doubts as were intimated in his last missive to ourselves!"

"I will have a better hope!" replied Earl Nevil, "if Dacre has even failed for the time, we shall yet be able to release the Queen from her bondage. Barnard Castle will be our own to-night, Sir George Bowes cannot hold it against an assault, and Sussex, it is clear, dares not sally to attack us from York; we shall yet ensnare the she wolf and her ravening train, in their own toils!"

While the earl spoke, a company of horsemen emerged from the dark woods which hung upon the sides of the hill near the camp. As these horsemen approached it more nearly, they were recognised as belonging to that party who had set out for Tutbury, with Leonard Dacre.

It should be observed that on leaving Raby,

the two earls had marched to Durham, where they were received with satisfaction by the inhabitants, and had restored the ancient form of worship. The communion table in the cathedral was thrown down, the English version of the bible torn in pieces, and the mass celebrated before several thousand people. From Durham, the earls had proceeded to Staindrop, Richmond, Darlington, and Rippen: in all which places they had restored the Catholic ritual. During these proceedings, the Queen's lieutenant, the Earl of Sussex, still remained stationary at York, and his inactivity permitted the two earls to besiege Sir George Bowes, who commanded the garrison of Barnard Castle. Their hopes had been lessened on hearing the news which had been sent to them by Lord Dacre, who on his arrival at Tutbury, had discovered that Queen Mary had been conveyed from that town to Coventry. He had however sent back a part of his company, who gave intelligence to the earls

of his determination to linger some days, in order to ascertain if it were practicable at the present time to rescue the Queen from her new prison. In the meantime the siege of Barnard Castle had already endured for nine days, the outworks were demolished, and as we have seen, the earls were preparing for an attack upon the inner fortress.

The air of Lord Dacre, as he saluted his friends, was anxious, no less than dispirited. He briefly said, he had found, that to have proceeded to Coventry, would very possibly have placed the life of the Queen of Scots in immediate danger: while from the number of royal troops collected there, and the great precautions observed in guarding her person, an attempt to rescue her could scarcely have proved successful. Having learned the most important particulars of the siege, he prayed his noble friends to grant him some private and immediate council; on this, they at once withdrew to Earl Percy's tent. Arrived there, Lord Dacre informed his friends, that at Tutbury he had

learned that the traitor Gilbert Giffard had suddenly left that town; that previous to his departure he had been again visited by the youth known under the name of Layton, and that the young cavalier, on that, his last visit, had been placed by Giffard in the hands of Sir Amias Paulet, by whom he had been sent under arrest to London. It was immediately upon this event, that the Scottish Queen had been removed from Tutbury. This intelligence was confirmed by a letter which Lord Dacre had just received from Vitelli, who, after complaining of the insults put upon him by Elizabeth and her ministers, bade his friends beware, that no plot on the part of Mary's other partisans, jarred with their own. He then reminded Lord Dacre of certain mysterious sights and sounds, of which he had been partially a witness in the old house at Blackfriars, and intimated his suspicions that they were connected both with the artifices of Elizabeth's ministers, and with some design for the liberation of her cousin. With regard, however, to

the latter unfortunate princess, Vitelli concluded by conjuring his friend, as he regarded her safety, to be cautious of his demonstrations in her favor; for, so exasperated were both the English Queen and her ministers, that any rash or premature endeavor to liberate Mary, would assuredly urge them on to assassination. It must also be observed that Lord Dacre, from the nature of the intelligence which he had gleaned respecting the cavalier, styled Layton, had reason to believe that the appellation was an assumed one, and that the unfortunate young man, who had so completely fallen into the snare spread by the false Giffard, was a person of good family, implicated with others, in some wild scheme for the enfranchisement of the Queen of Scots.

Under these circumstances, Leonard Dacre had considered that he could not do better than hasten to rejoin his friends, who, with himself, were too far committed to temporise with the government of Elizabeth.

On the most mature reflection it appeared to the earls, that no wiser course was to be adopted, than to pursue that measure of success with which they had hitherto been favored. Vitelli indeed expressed his discontent that the forces which he was to command had not yet arrived ; but the rapture with which their restoration of the ancient faith had been hailed, had kindled high hopes in the breasts of the noble friends. Barnard Castle would, they doubted not, on the morrow be their own ; they had already sent messages to the Catholic gentlemen in the different counties, and they were satisfied that a general rising would be the result of these messages. Besides, though complaining of their tardiness, Vitelli still held out the hope that the Spanish auxiliaries would ultimately be sent.

The night was fast approaching, and under cover of its darkness it was proposed to make the attack upon the Castle. As soon, therefore, as the shades of evening had settled on the

landscape, a party bearing scaling ladders cautiously approached the fortress, and another troop rolled two heavy culverins to a position that commanded the great gates. Not a sound as the besiegers approached the Castle, broke the stillness of the night, save that of their own footsteps, and whispering voices, with the occasional rumbling down the rocks of a stone which was displaced in their advance. In this manner they had climbed the steep rock on which stood the citadel, still defended by the ditch, and a strong wall. A party of reserve was now placed among the ruins of the outer works, by which they were sheltered from the shot or arrows of the besieged: this party was commanded by Marmaduke Norton. The chief body of their forces advanced with the two earls towards the great gates, and the scaling party under the conduct of Lord Dacre, had now reached the ditch, and prepared to mount, what had been decided upon as being, the least defensible portion of the wall. Hitherto all had been profound silence upon the Castle

walls, but ere the first of the assailants had gained their level, a ringing, clanking sound as of arms and arrows was heard, the glare of torches suddenly threw an angry looking glow, upon battlement above, and rocks and woods beneath; and a sharp discharge of arrows and small shot, came rattling over upon the besiegers. Of those who had attempted to ascend these walls, some were severely wounded, others, hurled from the ladders, came tumbling one over another into the fosse, at an expense of limb, attended in some instances by loss of life. An arrow glanced from the corslet of Lord Dacre, as he stood on the edge of the ditch, conspicuous by his bright armour, in the blaze of the torches. His men, meanwhile, momentarily startled by the severe repulse which they had received, manifestly wavered, some of the ladders too had been thrown down. Perceiving this, and animated by the dictates of valor, rather than prudence, Lord Dacre himself sprung into the dry fosse, and followed by two or three devoted adherents, himself raised

and fixed one of the fallen ladders, and made an attempt to gain the wall. This endeavor would have been at once frustrated, but that considerable confusion, even dissension, seemed to prevail among the besieged.

There was a trampling of feet, and loud and angry voices; of the torches too, the light of which had served to direct the volley of arrows and shot, some were suddenly extinguished, and others thrown still blazing into the fosse. Animated by his own object, Leonard did not perceive a number of men who ran along the wall, and desperately flung themselves from it into the ditch below. Lord Dacre had reached the last rundle of the ladder, and had already got one foot on the battlement, when a torch was held forth from the shelter of one of the huge buttresses, and he discovered by its light, a crowd of persons, some glittering in the panoply of knights and gentlemen, and others wearing only the steel quilted brigandine or jacket, and head-piece, in use for the common soldiers of the period. The confusion among

these people was evidently not of an amicable nature: but the moment that the helmet of Lord Dacre appeared above the wall, several persons, among whom was one in the array of a knight, rushed forward to oppose him. So desperate an effort to hurl him from the walls was made by the knight, that he fairly lost his footing, and had he not caught by the buttress before named, he must have fallen into the fosse: his followers were driven down the ladder by those of the knight, and when by a powerful effort he had regained his vantage ground, he found himself alone on the walls among his foes. At this moment a deafening roar, that was reverberated among the rocks which overhung the river, announced the discharge of the culverin. A wild, din of sounds succeeded, the cries of the leaders as they urged their men to the onset, the groans of the wounded, the rattling of arrows and small shot. A sharp combat ensued between Lord Dacre and the knight, by whom he had been first assailed on the battlements; but without a deci-

sive advantage on either side, till the point of Lord Dacre's sword parted the rivet which confined the knight's helmet, and he stood bare-headed before his antagonist, and with the blood flowing freely from a wound in his neck. Irritated by the pain, he lost that cool command of his weapon which he had hitherto displayed, and abandoning the defensive, he made so furious an attack upon Lord Dacre, that all the skill as well as courage of the latter, was necessary to ward off his blows. This very fury, however, defeated its own purpose, the knight exhausted himself by the violence of his onset, and was driven backwards step by step, till a well aimed thrust stretched him at his length upon the extreme verge of the battlements.

"Yield thee, rescue or no rescue!" said Lord Dacre, pointing his sword at his adversary's throat, and placing his foot upon his breast.

"I will not yield to I know not whom!" said the knight haughtily.

"Then yield thee to Leonard Dacre of Gilsland!"

"Ah, traitor!" replied the knight, "once before we measured swords, and is the advantage still to be thine? slay me, for I will take no favor at thy hands!"

Lord Dacre raised his sword, for he was irritated by the expression which the knight had used; but his better nature recovered itself.

"Ask thy life!" he said, but at that moment the torch which had been still held from the shelter of the buttress, and which had lighted the combat, was thrown down, and Lord Dacre received so severe a blow from the butt end of a pike, that he staggered under it, and the knight immediately sprung to his feet.

"Now then!" cried a voice which had in it a kind of maniac shrillness, "kill, kill him! brave Sir Philip! 'tis the man who robbed me of my good right hand! kill, kill him! for the Lord has yielded him to thy justice!"

The torch which had been so suddenly thrown

upon the ground, had expired; and in the darkness around him, Lord Dacre could hear the sounds of a deadly struggle; the knight had not indeed been left to maintain his combat with him unassisted, but that there was in the garrison of Barnard Castle, a party disposed to favor the cause of the besiegers.

In the darkness about him, Sir Philip Wynyard knew not now whether he was assailing friend or foe, and he called loudly for torches. Directly, however, that their murky glare flashed upon the grey turrets of the castle, three or four soldiers forced their way from among the groups, which had been struggling for the mastery over each other, during the combat between the knight and Lord Dacre; and interposing between them exclaimed—

“You have friends in the castle, noble lord, we will fight you a way to the sally port!”

Upon this Sir Philip and those of the garrison, who were favorably disposed to the royal cause, gathered together to oppose the

progress of Lord Dacre, and the soldiers; but they were diverted from their object by a new attempt of the party, headed by Marmaduke Norton, to scale the battlements; and while Sir Philip and a few of the men ineffectually opposed Lord Dacre, the rest again discharged their arquebusses, and hurled from the walls the soldiers who attempted to ascend them. Meanwhile the contest between the two parties in the garrison had not ceased, and on the more remote parts of the wall, others of the men, had recourse to the frantic expedient of leaping from it into the fosse; of these many broke their limbs, and some few were killed upon the spot. It was a hideous scene, the wall strewed with the wounded and the dying, and slippery with blood, the castle turrets brooding darkly over it, and the countenances of the soldiers animated by all the violence of rage and hate. Nor were the sounds which attended that scene less terrible—the deeply muttered curse, the scuffling feet, the clashing weapons, and

ever and anon the heavy roar of the culverin. Inch by inch Lord Dacre, and his adherents, fought their way to an inner court of the castle: at the entrance of this court Sir Philip sunk down, overcome by fatigue and loss of blood; it was then in the strong glare of the torches, that Leonard noticed a demoniac countenance glaring at him from the crowd, and a handless arm held up as in menace. But that face was quickly driven out of sight in the throng which filled the court, for here, though the thundering blows of the besiegers on the great gates were most plainly heard, the contests of the garrison raged with the utmost violence. In this court a strong party defended the sally port, which the disaffected soldiers were endeavouring to force: the appearance of Lord Dacre, and those who had aided him to force his way from the walls, decided the contest. The Queen's party flagged, and finally retreated towards the citadel, where Sir George Bowes still endeavoured to support the cause of his mistress.

At the first symptom of yielding on the part of the royalists, a desperate rush was made at the sally port, and Lord Dacre was borne, by the throng around him, into the fosse. The attempt to keep possession of this sally port was, however, repulsed by the besieged, the iron door was thrust back by Elizabeth's soldiers, who returned as their antagonists past through it, and a dismal cry was heard from one unhappy wretch, whose foot was crushed in a vain endeavour to escape. Thus, literally driven out of the castle, Lord Dacre repaired to the great gates, where the two earls were posted. The extraordinary strength of the walls had hitherto resisted all attempts to make a breach, but here too the mutiny of the garrison was visible, and the efforts to repulse the besiegers were interrupted by those who would fain have given them admittance to the fortress. Upwards of two hundred of the soldiers of Sir George Bowes had, by means of the sally ports, or by the hazardous expedient of leaping from the walls, managed to join the

Earls. Many of these poor wretches had been seriously hurt in making their escape, and their groans added to the horrors of the scene. The darkness of the night had again fallen on the walls of the castle. One division of the soldiers who were faithful to the governor, still kept their station on the towers, that flanked the gateway; and on each approach of the besiegers, had showered upon their heads a volley of stones, arrows, and other missiles; another party of these men were as sharply engaged in defending their comrades from the attacks of the mutineers. The last discharge of the culverin had dislodged and loosened some of the massive stones that composed the castle wall: but scarcely had its sullen roar subsided, when the blast of a trumpet was heard sounding for a parley, the blaze of torches again dispelled the surrounding obscurity, and a lance, with a white pennon attached to its point, was extended towards the besiegers. A voice was then

heard, beseeching the leaders of the besieging party to approach the castle walls, as the governor would fair have speech with them. The two earls, with Lord Dacre and the elder Norton, acceded to this request, and the sounds of the contest sunk into the hush of night. A wreath of white smoke from the last discharge of the cannon had not yet dissolved into the dank vapors that overhung the earth. The strong light of the flambeaux fully developed the group near which they were borne; the glittering armour of the gentlemen and knights, who stood with raised visors, and eyes directed towards the castle; and the more humble appearance of their soldiers, for the most part wearing no other defence than a corselet and a steel cap. More in the background was the main body of their forces, and here and there the eye was arrested by some ghastly object stretched upon the ground, and suffering under the agonies of a mortal wound: while the picture was

closed by a dark confusion of rocks and woods, dimly discoverable, as the flame of the torches swayed to and fro in the night wind.

Again a note of the trumpet sounded from one of the towers beside the gateway: more torches were brought forwards, and Sir George Bowes advanced to the edge of the battlements to parley with the besiegers. This knight was a stalwart and commanding person; he wore a suit of plain armour, with a sash of scarlet silk across his cuirass: he leaned with his right hand on the pommel of a heavy, unsheathed sword; he was unhelmeted, and his wiry, grey hair clustered in short, grizzled curls about a countenance, whose harsh and dark lineaments were thrown into full relief by the torches, the lurid light of which contrasted vividly with the almost inky blackness of the night. A group of soldiers, with two or three gentlemen, who were among the garrison of the castle, stood a little behind Sir George Bowes. The severe character of this man's

countenance was remarked by Lord Dacre, even in his remote position below the castle walls; had he stood with him on the battlements, he would have seen that rage and mortification were there fiercely struggling for a mastery; but smothering both mortification and rage, Sir George spoke to the two earls, his deep voice echoing hoarsely amid the stillness of the night.

“ Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland,” he said, “ it rests with you, as true knights and brave gentlemen, to spare a useless effusion of blood. Know, proud lords, that the citadel of Barnard Castle is still mine own: and I could, yet surrounded by my faithful few, continue for some time to maintain it, in your despite, and in that of the traitors, who have this very night deserted me, and the cause of Queen Elizabeth. But were I so to hold the fortress, the consequence would be only a prolonged slaughter, a slaughter of your soldiers, and mine own. To avoid

this waste of blood, I am willing to agree to an honorable surrender. A surrender on these conditions, that you pledge your word, as knights and peers, to allow to me, Sir George Bowes, and to my friends, a free passage from the castle; and that you permit those among the garrison to follow us, who are still faithful to the queen, my gracious mistress. Upon these terms the gates shall be thrown open, and I will deliver to you the keys. I will give, if it please you, my lords, an hour for your consideration of these terms."

A few hasty words now passed between the earls and Lord Dacre; then the latter stepped forwards, and as Sir George Bowes was retreating from the battlements, the voice of Lord Dacre arrested his steps.

"Brave servant of Queen Elizabeth, and most knightly governor of Barnard Castle!" he said, "it does not need that we should take an hour to deliberate. Heaven forefend, say the noble Earls, that they should urge on an effusion of Christian blood; or deny to a vali-

ant knight, and loyal commander, any knightly courtesy or grace. Sir George Bowes, the Earls of Westmoreland and Northumberland, accept the surrender of Barnard Castle upon the terms which you have proposed!"

"Honorable sir!" replied Sir George Bowes, "I will forthwith command that the gates of the castle, be opened to admit the two earls!"

So saying, Sir George bent his head with a haughty politeness, and retreated from the battlements. In a short space the gates were thrown open, and the two earls, attended by Lord Dacre, the Nortons, and a select body of their retainers, took formal possession of the fortress. At the entrance of the low-browed keep, stood Sir George, with a page at his side, bearing the keys of the castle, which on the appearance of the earls, he took into his own hands and delivered to them, requesting at the same time, that his soldiers might be allowed an hour to make their preparations for abandoning the castle, this request was readily and courte-

ously granted. Meantime the forces of the Earls were employed, some in mounting guard upon the castle walls, and others in seeking for, and bringing in their wounded comrades. In a council too, which immediately after they had taken possession of the castle, was held by the leaders of the enterprise, it was resolved, that after having fixed a proper garrison to maintain their conquest, they should endeavor to seize the port of Hartlepool, as the means of communicating with their foreign allies would thereby be much facilitated.

The dubious light of a December morning, had broken over the castle ere it was finally abandoned by its late governor. Lord Dacre, who was engaged with a party of soldiers in an examination of the walls, was attracted by the noise in the court below. Sir George Bowes was mounted on a stately black horse, and as he caught the eye of Lord Dacre turned towards him, he made a grave, but courteous salutation. In the features of a cavalier who rode beside Sir George, Leonard recognised his

antagonist of the preceding evening, Sir Philip Wynyard. This young man had been but very slightly known to Lord Dacre at the court of Elizabeth, and he was at a loss to understand his assertion that they had encountered each other before, when the advantage had then also been on his side. The countenance of Sir Philip was now pale, a surgical bandage crossed his shoulder, and he wore his right arm in a sling : like Sir George, he too perceived Lord Dacre, and spurring his horse out of the rank ; he hailed him from the court. “ Lord of Gilsland ! ” he said, in a tone which trembled from an excess of passion and disappointment, “ Lord of Gilsland ! Fortune, who is ever capricious in her favors, seems for the present resolved that I should remain in thy debt for a long arrear of wrongs which had thy interference for their primal source. But Philip Wynyard would not leave such debt unpaid, and Fortune, as I have said, is still capricious ; we may yet meet where none may come to

part us, and in the meantime, forget not thine opponent of Lombard Street !”

With these words, and waving his hand to Lord Dacre with an air of defiance, Sir Philip followed his friend through the gateway which formed the entrance of the inner court of the castle. Among the troop of foot soldiers, who were then passing through the court, Lord Dacre observed the detestable countenance which had attracted his attention on the preceding night. The features of Ralph Adams indeed, when once seen could not be very readily forgotten. The allusion, however, of Sir Philip to the adventure in Lombard Street, excited amid all the more weighty matters which pressed upon it at the time, some consideration in the mind of Lord Dacre. The dangerous wound indeed which that night's misadventures had caused his poor friend Willoughton to receive, would alone have impressed every circumstance of the fray upon his memory.

Sir Philip Wynyard then, was confessedly the abductor of the unfortunate Lucy; the fate of that damsel would have been a matter of interest to Lord Dacre even apart from all consideration of his friend Henry, for she was dear as a sister to Gertrude Harding. How anxiously did he wish that he could convey to Willoughton this clue to Lucy's fate which he had himself so unexpectedly obtained. But alas, the destiny of the youth himself was become a matter for the mournful speculation of his friends. The father of Gertrude Harding was in prison, and from him, only a few days before her compelled flight from London, the damsel had heard that Henry was convalescent, and had proposed to join his friend Dacre in the north: since all endeavours to trace out the lost Lucy, seemed for the present unsuccessful. Why then had he not yet appeared? He could not be so rash as to linger in London merely from a hope of assisting John Harding, that was an attempt which his

daughter had felt must prove abortive ; was it not but too likely that Henry had himself been seized by the suspicious government of Elizabeth? Lord Dacre sighed to think that in this no doubt, was the solution of the non appearance of his friend.

CHAPTER II.

It is my love that calls upon my name,
How silver sweet sound lovers tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE shadows of a winter evening were fast descending over the little chamber in which Lucy Fenton lay, when she recovered to a consciousness of her situation. A sense of languor more oppressing than any which she had ever before felt, subjected her to its influence; she attempted to rise, but unequal even to that slight exertion, she sunk back almost fainting on her pillow. Through the half closed cur-

tains of the little bed on which she lay, she could discover the light of the fire from the outer apartment; flashing and flickering on the glass in the door between the two rooms. Lucy pressed her hand upon her brow, and strove to compose her thoughts into a less confused remembrance of her present condition; the effort partly induced a return of that acute pain in her head, which had preceded her insensibility. She distinctly remembered the kindness with which she had been sheltered by the inmates of the cottage; and the noise which she had heard after retiring to rest, together with the entrance of the persons bearing the wounded man. Beyond this all was a blank, yet still she had a kind of vague conception that some time had elapsed, it was the shade of evening, and not the morning light that pervaded her chamber, of that she was convinced. Lucy now thought of her cousin, her father, and her lover, and she shed tears at those thoughts, for she felt very ill, and a sense of calamity, no less than of sick-

ness, oppressed her. As she thus lay, too weak to move, and almost to speak, the door between her chamber and the sitting apartment of the cottage was softly opened, and the good woman Cicely stole cautiously to her bed side. Lucy extended her hand as she approached, and inquired in a faint but eager tone, what was the hour, and whether she might be able to reach London that day.

“Alas, poor child!” answered Cicely, “it will be well if thy strength be sufficiently restored for thee to leave our cottage in another week!”

“Another week!” said Lucy, with an accent of astonishment, “my good mother, my fatigues, and perils of the last few days, have indeed I find most sadly overcome my strength, but surely if I die in the endeavour to reach it, I cannot stay from my home another week!”

“Poor maiden!” replied Cicely, “you are not, I perceive, aware that you have been lying sick almost unto death in my poor cottage for

more than a fortnight. Praise heaven, my dear child, that it hath been pleased to restore thy reason, which indeed we have feared was gone for ever!"

"Good Cicely, then I beseech you!" said Lucy, "if this be so, even add to the measure of thy charity by sending to my father, and uncle, I will supply thee with a direction to their dwelling, and they will contrive in some mode to relieve thee of the heavy charge, of attending to a sick damsel!"

The brow of Cicely now became both grave and sad, and in a tone, which though still kind, expressed a firm determination not to accede to Lucy's request, she bade her be content in the assurance, that as soon as her recovery would permit, she should be conveyed in safety to her friends; but that for them to be admitted to the cottage was impossible. To an inquiry from Lucy as to the matter in which this impossibility consisted, Cicely answered that it was one which might not be very

readily explained, adding in a tone of complaining sorrow—

“ I will not judge of you so harshly, maiden, as to believe that you would return evil for good, and tender a cup of poison to the lips of those whom I regard, because I took you wandering and a stranger to the shelter of my roof, and nursed you even as a child! Believe, damsel, that for a stranger to approach this cottage now, would be death to the being whom I love most on earth. Ah, ask me not not to sign his death warrant, because thou art for the sake of a few days, impatient to see thy friends!”

“ Think me not so ungrateful!” said Lucy, tears starting into her eyes as she spoke, “ believe, kind Cicely, I would sooner die on this bed, where your charity has ministered to me in my sickness, than be the cause of harm, however trifling, to any person whom you love!”

“ I do indeed believe so much of you, gentle maiden!” answered Cicely, then recommending

Lucy again to seek repose, and he stole softly as before out of the little chamber. The extreme lassitude which had been caused by the violence of the fever under which Lucy had suffered for the last fortnight, soon compelled her, though unwillingly, to comply with the recommendation of Cicely; yet, ere she yielded to the heavy torpor which again subdued her senses, she caught the low tones of a man's voice conversing with her hostess in the adjoining room. The voice was not Walter's, that she knew, for its sounds were musical, and melancholy; besides she heard Cicely term the speaker, "her heart's own treasure, her darling boy!"

Could this person so affectionately addressed, be the same whom on the first night of her abode at the cottage she had seen brought there so desperately wounded? Lucy remembered the despair which was then expressed by Cicely, and did not doubt that such was the case, or that this young man was the per-

son on whose account she was so anxious and alarmed.

As Lucy became convalescent, she was convinced that her surmises were in this particular correct. On the first day that, with Cicely's assistance, she was able to creep into the outer apartment; she found, sitting by the fire, and propped up with cushions, that young man whom she had seen on the night of her arrival. His handsome countenance was yet pale with the loss of blood: but on Lucy's appearance he rose, saying that he would give place to the fairer invalid. Of this she would not hear, but sensibly affected by discovering that Cicely had attended to her in her sickness, even though harassed at the time by apprehensions for one so much dearer, she repeated her thanks to that good woman for her kindness, and her regret for the trouble which she had occasioned.

"And this is the way that my boy too molests me with his thanks!" said Cicely; "be but submissive, my children, to the instructions

of your nurse, and she will warrant that you shall not long stand in need of her cares; be but quiet and happy, and ye shall be soon in health. Now, I will put the maiden, Hubert under your charge, let her not sink into melancholy, but even cheer her with some of those fine tales which you have told me of your travels!"

The youth literally obeyed Cicely's injunction, relieving the tedium of Lucy's slow recovery, by spreading before her the rich stores of his highly cultivated mind. For hours, while the good wife was occupied in her household cares, was she left alone in the company of this youth: but those hours were never weary, all that he had read, and all that he had seen, became tinted when he spoke, with the bright glow of his own enthusiasm; and Lucy, when she thought of his conversation on retiring to her chamber, often wondered how it was, that he could throw such a strength of interest over the commonest subject on which he touched. It might have been thought that these two

young people thus thrown into each other's society, and both equally attractive in person, and amiable in manners, might have come speedily to indulge for each other, a sentiment far warmer than friendship. But the heart of Lucy was secured by her strong and inviolable attachment to Willoughton, an attachment founded on a long acquaintance with his many excellent qualities: and for the youth, his manner towards her, had all that innocent and affectionate freedom, which might have characterised the tenderest of brothers: none of the timid consciousness, none of the restraint of love was there. He seemed indeed a being wrapt in a glorious dream of existence, too bright for the sober enjoyment of mortality. Lucy laughingly told him one day, that she believed he might fall in love with a sun-beam, or a star; but that as to anything so earthly as a woman, a mere mould of mortal clay, she must expect to be at once depreciated by his brilliant imagination. The youth sighed deeply, and lowered his blue

eyes as Lucy spoke, she fancied too, though he bent his head, and the long curls of his brown hair fell over his face, that she could discover beneath the shade of those curls, a deep glow for a moment mantle over his pale cheek. The confusion of Hubert, was however dispelled by a knock at the cottage door, which on being opened by Cicely, who had been engaged in the adjoining room, admitted her husband Walter, with a gay looking, handsome youth, whom the invalid saluted as his dear, and faithful Layton. This Layton however, looked at the damsel in a manner which convinced her that her absence would be agreeable both to him and to his friend, and ever sensitive with regard to the inconvenience which she might occasion to her hosts; she immediately withdrew to her own apartment. The stay of Master Layton at the cottage was not long, but while he staid, an earnest conversation was carried on between him and his friend. Cicely after awhile joined Lucy in the inner apartment, and kept her in converse, as though

she feared that a word of the discussion in the outer room should meet her ears. After the departure of that cavalier, Hubert appeared to be in high spirits, and his animation gave to his fair, and finely moulded features, a brilliancy of beauty which Lucy had never witnessed before; his strength too seemed to rally with his spirits, and within two days after the visit of his friend, he was able to traverse the copse in the neighbourhood of the cottage. Thus matters went on for a fortnight after Lucy left her chamber, and so much was her own strength renovated, that the day was appointed on which Walter was to conduct her back to her father's house; but she was still very weak, and had been so animated throughout the day by the expectation of again embracing her friends, that towards evening her strength suddenly failed, and she was seized with a faintness, the effect, Cicely decided, of her excessive excitement. Being persuaded of this, the good dame insisted that the damsel should immediately retire to bed; giving her at the same

time, one of the opiates which the simplicity of her medical art prescribed. This opiate was however, much stronger than Cicely had probably imagined, and it was long past noon on the following day when Lucy awoke. A confused recollection she had of troubled dreams; and she had some idea of having once been partially awake, and of seeing some strange faces in her room.

This recollection was however confused, and she was only distinctly sensible that her sleep had been unusually torpid, and long. She now rose, and hastily began to hurry on her clothes, but was surprised that she did not hear any voice or foot in the outer apartment: still greater too was her surprise, to perceive that rude feet had been evidently trampling among the fresh rushes which Cicely had strewed on the preceding evening over the floor of her little chamber. With a nervous tremor she now put on her garments, for her heart already began to throb with the apprehension of some new and dreadful evil. Evil to her

kind hosts; indeed she felt that this was but too probable, their mode of living, their refusal, even with all their kindness, to summon her relatives round what might have proved her deathbed, all betokened some mystery in which their well being, if not even their lives was involved. And the terrible government of Queen Elizabeth, that was ever present to the mind of Lucy.

Scarcely waiting even to fasten her bodice, she now opened the door that led to the outer room: and here her fears received their first confirmation, all within was silent and deserted. The ashes from the fire of the preceding night lay white and cold upon the hearth, the oaken chair in which the wounded youth had been accustomed to recline, was thrown down. The bed upon the floor of this room which Cicely had make up for herself and her husband, since their cottage had sheltered two sick guests, had evidently never been entered. One desperate hope yet remained, and Lucy, in compliance with its

suggestions, threw open the door of the little closet in which Hubert slept, it was untenanted like the other apartments. A mantle which the young man had worn the day before was thrown over the bed; and his sword lay unsheathed upon the ground. Mechanically Lucy lifted it, and there perceived graven on the upper part of the blade the letters A B, apparently the initials of the owner's name. He had indeed always been styled Hubert by Cicely and her husband; but Lucy had reason to believe that the appellation was merely an assumed one; for on more than one occasion Cicely had hesitated in addressing him, as though another name had been about, from mere habit, to escape her lips. To Lucy it was now evident that some misfortune had in the course of the past night overtaken her kind protectors; and this misfortune too probably was their arrest on some suspicions of the government; by the ministers of which they had no doubt been hurried at a brief notice

from their retreat, and while she still slept under the effects of the opiate which Cicely had administered. She could not believe that either that benevolent woman or her husband, would willingly have abandoned her in so strange a manner. The evident lowliness of their own station in life might indeed have availed to secure them from danger, even in that troublesome age; but the youth Hubert, to whom they appeared heart and soul devoted, was manifestly a person of education and of birth, and it was, Lucy did not doubt, on his behalf, that those kind creatures had subjected themselves to the most terrible misfortunes.

Meanwhile, as we have said, the lengthening shadows warned her that the hour of noon was now passed, and the fogs of a winter day came ereeping over the cottage casements. She felt that deserted as the habitation now was, it would be dangerous long to remain its inmate, and that, though still feeble from illness, she must forthwith set out for London. A brown

cloth hood and cloak, which Cicely had been for the last two days employed in trimming with cherry-colored ribbons for the damsel to wear on her return home, still hung upon the hook in her chamber where it had been placed: and in this Lucy now invested herself, tears falling from her eyes as she thought on the probable fate of the donor. Her heart too, now that she was prepared to leave the cottage, sunk when she remembered that she was wholly destitute of money, for how could she calculate what mischance might possibly befall her, even in her short journey to London. The oaken press in the sitting apartment was, she knew, the depository of its owner's little store of money, and could she find any there she would not hesitate to supply herself with the small sum necessary for her present comfort and security. On examining the press, she found that its doors had been burst open, and its contents thrown into disorder, as though they had been tumbled

over in search, she concluded, of papers or documents, which might help to criminate the owners of the cottage; but no money could she find there, and returning in despair to her little chamber, she sunk in a musing attitude upon the bed. Her action dislodged the pillow, and a small bag immediately fell from beneath it on the floor. The sound discovered that it contained the money, by the want of which Lucy was so much distressed, and hastily picking it up she found in it two rose nobles, and some silver coin. Her heart throbbed with gratitude and affection, for she did not doubt, that even amid the hurry and distress of her probably compelled departure, that the excellent Cicely had been so mindful of her and of her distress, as to slip the purse beneath her pillow. There was now no cause for more delay on Lucy's part, in a place where she was perhaps surrounded by many dangers, and casting her swimming eyes sorrowfully at the desolate hearth of the kind beings who

had cheered her with every attention, she hastened with a timid hand to unlatch the cottage door, closing it carefully after her. All was silent, as she passed through the copse that surrounded it; and the vapors of the season floated among the naked twigs of the hazel and hawthorn. As Lucy approached the pond, with its overhanging oak, which marked the entrance of the thicket, her heart throbbed with a yet more painful apprehension for her kind friends, for she remembered the forlorn, and desolate condition in which she had approached their hospitable door but a few weeks before: and it was grievous to think that those charitable beings were now, perhaps, suffering under calamities even more hopeless than those from which they had rescued her.

The pond was frozen now, and the branches of the decayed oak, hung black and bleak above it. Lucy remembered the story of the murder committed beneath that aged oak, and involuntarily quickening her step, hurried past it

into the open road. Arrived there, as she more slowly pursued her way, her thoughts recurred to her escape from the house of Sir Philip Wynyard ; and the mysterious mode in which it had been effected. Euphrasia, she did not doubt was that concealed friend ; and who was Euphrasia ? What record of misery and guilt was hidden, with an agony which almost burst its sad receptacle, in the heart of that extraordinary woman ? But from such thoughts, and from sorrow for the fate of the kind Cicely and her husband, and of the youthful, and accomplished Hubert, Lucy was diverted by her own present distresses. She had not proceeded a quarter of a mile from the copse, when she found that her limbs, enfeebled by illness, were but ill-calculated to bear her, unassisted, to London. She now loitered along the road in the hope of being overtaken by some wayfarer who might direct her where to procure a horse. In this hope she was not disappointed, when she had advanced about a mile upon her way, she heard a horse's hoofs sharply

approaching, and presently she was hailed by a rosy, burly looking man, mounted on a strong grey horse, and who, compassionating the condition of a lonely damsel, traversing the way to London on foot, offered to take her behind him. This offer was most gladly accepted by the weak and tottering Lucy ; and the stout steed soon set off under his double load with a briskness that raised the spirits of the forlorn girl, with the hope of soon beholding the relations from whom she had been so long, and so strangely separated. The good man who had thus kindly proffered to make her the companion of his journey, was, she found, a Kentish farmer, bound on a visit to a married daughter, who lived in the borough of Southwark. Lucy had designed on reaching Greenwich, to take a boat which might convey her to London bridge, but the farmer would not hear of any such proposal. She might as well ride with him upon his horse, and it was hard if his daughter could not give her a wing of a fowl, and a manchet, with a good cup of spiced ale.

"For truth to say poor thing!" said the old man, "thee look'st but weak and sickly."

The hamlet of Deptford had long been past, and Lucy and her companion travelled amid the marshes, and fields, which at that time extended from thence to London, interrupted only here and there by a house of some pretensions, or a few straggling cottages. At length, to her great delight they entered the main street of Southwark, and she beheld not only the tall overhanging houses of that borough, but joy of joys, she could catch through the fog, a glimpse of the dusky tenements which nodded on either side of the bridge. The residence of the farmer's daughter was a little past the famed inn of the Tabard; and fain would the honest man, on assisting Lucy to alight, have persuaded her to pause, and partake of his daughter's hospitality. This, the latter, in her eagerness to reach home, most positively declined, but promised that she would visit her some other day, and named to the old man, the residence of her father and her

uncle, begging that he would come and see them before he left London.

Insensible was poor Lucy to the effects of her late illness now, and with a foot as fleet as the fawn's she hurried first to Grass Street, fondly picturing the delight, and the surprise which would be testified both by her uncle, and by Gertrude, on her unexpected appearance. What however, was her consternation and disappointment, when on reaching the house she perceived its doors and windows closed, the furniture and merchandise within, having been apparently removed, and the whole dwelling bearing an aspect of desolation, as though its tenants were departed or dead. Lucy's heart sunk, and she leaned for support against the doorway.

London was not then what it has since become, the huge reservoir into which poured all the life streams of the country ; all its wealth and population ; and two hours after noon on a foggy day in December, even Grass Street was

comparatively silent and deserted. Tears were now streaming fast down Lucy's face, she knew well in what daily danger her family were involved, merely by their adherence to the ancient faith : might it not at least have brought them under the pains and penalties, of those cruel laws, which it had pleased Queen Elizabeth to impose upon all who abided by the religion of her own fathers. Impressed with this dread, Lucy almost trembled to enquire the fate of those whom she loved so well : for were they really in prison, she knew that it might be of some consequence to them, that one in whose heart they were cherished, should be free. Drawing her hood, therefore, cautiously over her face, she first took her way to the Street of the Lombards to examine the dwelling of her father : there her worst suspicions were confirmed, for that too was silent and solitary : to her still greater surprise, she perceived that the house of Master Allen, the goldsmith, was also closed. Lucy now hesitated, for she knew not

where she might venture to ask for intelligence respecting her friends ; for so black a treachery unhappily pervaded society, that, had her relations indeed fallen under suspicion, she felt that nothing was more probable than that the persons to whom she applied for information, might immediately hasten to denounce herself to the government. Actuated by this feeling, Lucy sunk in tears upon the threshold of her father's door, which now, alas, in-hospitable, opened not to receive her, who, weary, wandering, and faint, had reached it once more and in vain. She recognised the faces of the few passengers, and there was not a house on the spot whose inmates she had not known from her childhood. Any danger, however, was preferable to such horrible suspense, and springing forwards in a kind of desperation, Lucy ventured to intercept a portly citizen, who arrayed in a furred mantle, and wearing a gold chain, was with a stately air, taking his way down the Street of the Lombards.

“ Good, sir !” said Lucy beseechingly, “ will

it please you tell me, what has become of Master Richard Fenton, the goldsmith, and his brother-in-law, John Harding, the mercer of Grass Street?"

"Out, out, woman!" said the city dignitary with an air of wounded consequence, "think you that I, Michael Wicksteed, alderman of Candlewick Ward, a true and loyal servant of our most gracious Queen Elizabeth! know aught of such men? Woman, woman, being as I am, what should I know about fellows! traitors! who have fallen under the displeasure of her Grace?"

Poor Lucy shrunk back, she had ventured to accost the worshipful Master Wicksteed, because, though his portly person was extremely well known to her, she believed him in the magnitude of his dignities, to be without any knowledge of herself.

"Then you cannot tell me what has become of the late owners of those houses?" she said as she drew back despondingly.

"Why!" said Master Wicksteed, in a

chuckling tone, and with a roguish kind of twinkle dancing in his little grey eyes, "why, woman, I do not exactly tell thee that: the house yonder, next to Master Fenton's was, till late, the habitation of one Allen, a well intentioned citizen, troubled with the sore affliction of a scolding wife. But the dame, it seems, has fallen under the displeasure of the Queen's grace, and, ha! ha!" and here the old fellow crowed with as much delight as though the case had been his own, "they have clapped the jade in a prison; a marvellous school for correcting the tongue; but they may let her out again, and, oh, good Master Allen, wise and worthy Allen, ha! ha! he will trust in no evil chances, he has packed up his chattels and his gold, and betaken him to a secure retreat, safe from the tongue of Mistress Bertha. Truly a wise expedient, a very proper proceeding, one which I will even take into mine own serious consideration; for those who cannot fight, 'tis surely best to fly!"

Arrived at this conclusion, Master Wicksteed

suddenly found that his auditor had departed, he just perceived the border of her brown mantle as she turned towards the Chepe, and muttering to himself, "a most perverse and unmannerly wench!" he betook him on his way.

Lucy, who, as the alderman spoke, had suddenly resolved at once to seek the house of her lover, at Charing, passed rapidly on, unheeding that, as she hurried up the Chepe, a squeaking, tremulous voice bade her stop.

"Heaven's will! here is wilfulness!" gasped good Master Williams, "why, Lucy, Mistress Lucy Fenton! stop a moment, my bud of a May morning! I have good news for thee, cherry lip!"

These ejaculations however, of the poor tailor, were lost upon Lucy, whose distracted mind gave to her footsteps something of that fleetness which they had possessed when she was in the full enjoyment of health and happiness. Completely out of breath, at last Master Williams gave up the hope of overtaking her;

and muttering to himself. "Let it be, she is on my road no doubt!" he relaxed his pace to one better fitted to his age and infirmities.

As for Lucy, the distress of her mind had for the time nerved her frame, and in her long walk from the Chepe to Charing, she neither flagged nor staid. The leaden twilight of the season was closing round the village when she reached it; but what was her dismay when, on gaining the dwelling of her lover, she discovered the garden gate torn from its hinges, and the garden itself laid waste. The dwelling too, was in no better condition, the doors had been pulled down, the casements beaten in; on approaching it more nearly too, she discovered that it had been the prey of fire, which had reduced it to little more than a mere shell. Mechanically the unhappy girl stole round to that little casement of the library where she had so often sat with her lover; that also had been beaten in, but as Lucy leaned despondingly on the sill, and looked into the room she perceived that it had been apparently less devastated by

the flames than the other parts of the house; a low garden door too which led to this apartment, had been like the rest torn down. Lucy approached this door, yet she hesitated upon its threshold, for all was dim and silent within, and the rising wind swept with a melancholy sound through the dismantled casements. The walls of this apartment were constructed of stone, and it was partly detached from the main body of the building, hence had it so far escaped the fire.

Again Lucy advanced, again receded, but an impulse stronger even than her fears, prompted her to enter the dwelling which had so often echoed to the voice of that being whom she loved best on earth. Overcoming therefore the combined emotion of superstition, and natural fear, which had induced her to hesitate at first, she entered the ruined dwelling. The staircase which led to the upper apartments, had the balustrade broken down, and was itself in so ruinous a state that it would have been dangerous to mount it:

in a like condition also was the floor of the saloon which led to the library. .

Lucy passed into the little anti-chamber, in which Lord Dacre had discovered the murdered body of old Martin, and which, like the library, had escaped the worst devastation of the flames. A bitter sigh burst from her bosom as she entered this apartment: was it the hollow voice of the wind only, or did she hear some person utter a responsive sigh? Lucy trembled, and glanced fearfully through the shadows that spread over the remote corners of the room. Was that fancy too, or did she perceive a dark figure emerge from the obscurity, and advance towards her. She stood for a moment literally spell bound by terror, then, as the figure still approached her, she screamed hysterically, and turned to seek security in flight; her limbs however seemed to refuse their office, and she sunk powerless on the ground; but a well-known voice then sounded in her ears, and in the next moment

she was locked in the embrace of Henry Willoughton. The bliss of that moment, did not seem too dearly bought, by all the perils which she had passed.

CHAPTER III.

“ Then news into leeve London came,
In all the speed that ever may be,
And word is brought to our royal Quene
Of the rising in the north countrie.

Her grace, she turned her round about,
And like a royal Quene she swore,
I will ordaine them such a breakfast
As never was in the north before !

She caused thirty thousand men be raised,
With horse, and harness, fair to see ;
She caused thirty thousand men be raised,
To take the Earls in the north countrie.”

“ Rising in the North.

Percy's Reliques.”

AWAY from the dim and desolate abodes, from
the bitter moaning of the night wind, and

more bitter lamentation of all that humanity may claim of noble, and of good, plunged into all that it knows of suffering. Away from the dark prison, from the roofless hut, to the regal splendours of the council chamber at Whitehall !

The curtains of crimson cloth were drawn over the deep recesses of the windows, an enormous wood fire blazed upon the hearth, and a massive bronzed lamp, dependent over the council table, threw its light upon the countenances of those who encircled it.

The chief of Elizabeth's famed advisers were there. To the right of the throne sat the gay and profligate Leicester, and opposite to him was seated Cecil, with Walsingham, his rival in cruelty, and in deceit.

Meanwhile the Queen had not yet taken her seat at the council table. Walsingham and Cecil were discussing in a low tone the merits of a pile of papers which lay before them, Leicester sat lost, apparently, in a reverie.

Suddenly the door of Elizabeth's closet

opened, and with all the fury of her race blazing in her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, she seated herself upon the throne. Her first words were those of bitter reproach to her ministers, for it was a custom of the Queen, when the affairs of state crossed her inclination, to impose all blame upon the shoulders of her advisers. She burst into a volley of oaths and vituperation, observing in conclusion—

“ Truly our sage, and far seeing counsellors, ye have done well! that while ye infected our peace of mind, and broke even our nightly repose, with whispers of imaginary plots, and daggers lurking in the dark; ye have done well, I say, while your busy brains were employed in combating these monsters of their own invention, to suffer rebellion to unfurl her broad banner in the blaze of day!”

“ Had it pleased your grace!” said Leicester, “ to have hearkened somewhat sooner, to those suspicions which your faithful servants sug-

gested, of Leonard Dacre, and the two Earls, their arrest had been surety for their loyalty!"

"Ah, you are wise, my lord!" said Elizabeth, "but when our ears are so assailed with foul charges, that we might well believe that we governed only a nation of traitors, please you to compound for some womanly weakness on our part, which is slow to look for treachery in all!"

"It were to be wished," said Walsingham, "that the other treason to which your Grace alludes, were indeed as it hath pleased you to term it, a mere invention of the brain!"

"We will see to these plots, anon!" replied Elizabeth, "fear us not, our good counsellors, not again will we err on the side of a womanish mercy! Heaven's truth! those traitor Earls have had some secret warning, some spy, escaping from our court, warned them of our intents, and urged them on to brave our power."

"The damsel, Gertrude Harding, has not been found, madam," said Cecil, "yet it were

a sore trial for a young maid's courage, to travel to the North alone!"

"Yet her courage would have dared such trial!" answered the Queen, "oh, 'twas a brave wench, we could have loved her for her gallant spirit. But attend, Cecil," she added in a sharper tone, "attend that we have no more delays; by the soul of our father they may look well to their own heads, who let the Earls escape! We like not this loitering in Sussex, who lies like a sluggard with his men at York, while the audacious rebels to our authority, march at their pleasure over our fair counties of the North!"

"It is indeed an unseemly delay!" remarked Leicester, who was an enemy of the lieutenant, "it is indeed an unseemly delay, to linger while the bold Earls have made themselves masters of the good castle of Barnard!"

"It were time indeed we looked to the matter ourselves, or that others looked to the conduct of Sussex," said the Queen, "but," she added with an oath, "our faithful Ralph Sadler

shall set out for York to-morrow, and then! then let Sussex look well to himself! Are we a Queen to be thus defied! if there be a woman's spirit in our generals, we will show them what it is to bear the spirit of a man, we will take horse ourselves, but we will punish the rebels, they shall feel naught of our sceptre but its weight."

"It need not be, gracious sovereign!" said Cecil, "it need not be that your sacred person be so exposed. The Earl of Warwick, and your grace's most noble cousin of Hunsdon, march against the rebels; believe, most royal lady, that our next advices will speak of their defeat!"

"And how plead you, my lord, for the traitorous delays of Sussex?" said the Queen. "What palliation can your ingenuity frame for his sloth?"

"May it please your grace to remember!" said Walsingham, "that the army of Sussex, is for the most part composed of Catholic gentlemen and their tenants. Shall we blame

him that he hesitated solely on their support, to oppose the two earls !”

“ Now, Walsingham,” exclaimed the Queen, “ how mighty a slander hast thou uttered in those few words against our gracious rule ; it beseemeth not then, that we should expect our subjects of the ancient faith, to bend to the yoke of that authority, which our good Walsingham will not deny, has laid somewhat heavily on their necks !”

“ I meant not,” said Walsingham, “ I meant not to imply, that your Grace should not expect, with all confidence, the duty, and loving services of all your subjects ; be they of the ancient faith or not !”

“ You meant not to say so, Walsingham !” returned the Queen, fixing her eyes upon him with a piercing expression, “ but we know, that did we know less the spirit which animates our Catholic subjects, we should expect not loving services from them ! No, no, Walsing-

ham, thou needst not palter so with us: we expect not the loyalty of Catholics for love, but we will compel them to be loyal in their fears. Theirs is a divided house, and lo! it shall not stand! Read that!" concluded the Queen, flinging a packet upon the table.

The Secretary unfolded the parcel, it proved to be a letter from the Earl of Derby to Elizabeth; she had received it not an hour before the meeting of the council. This letter enclosed another, which had been sent by the confederated noblemen, Percy and Nevil, to the Earl, pressing him, as a brother in that faith, which had been so long trampled down by Elizabeth, to take arms with them in its defence. The letter of Derby to the Queen, abounded in assurances of his own loyalty, of which indeed he had given ample proof, in thus betraying the confidence of the two earls.

"What think ye of our loyal Catholic subjects, my lieges?" said Elizabeth in a tone of

sarcasm ; as her ministers finished the perusal of the missive.

“ We dared not hope for so much loyalty !” answered Cecil.

“ Be not surprised, my lords !” replied the Queen, “ oh, we shall have more such testimonies ; now that our stout cousin of Hunsdon is marching to the North, demonstrations of Catholic loyalty will abound ! Now by our eternal soul !” continued Elizabeth, striking her clenched hand upon the council table. “ We do despise the cringing recreants ; more do we honor even black treason’s self, in the poor damsel of Grass Street, than such a lip deep loyalty in knights, and earls. Oh, oh, we will reward them for such loyalty ! The block and the halter, my lords, for the poor romantic few, who splinter lances for the ancient faith ; the many will crouch without a murmur at our feet !”

“ It was ever my opinion !” remarked Walsingham, “ that but slender mercy should

be shown to the followers of the ancient religion!"

"Believe our good Walsingham!" said Elizabeth, "you shall ne'er upbraid us with having yielded mercy to them more!"

"Might it please your Grace," said Leicester, "to allow me also, to march with my lord of Hunsdon, against these rebels to your rule?"

Elizabeth hesitated for a moment, and then replied with some sharpness in her tone. "I pray you trouble us with that request no more, in sooth, my good lord, we need your counsel at the present time. And now, Walsingham, what more of these pleasant matters of treason have we to discuss?"

"Alas, most gracious queen!" answered Walsingham, "the rank plant treason will still put forth new blossoms, and new leaves, while your royal hand pours water on its root!"

"Ah!" said Elizabeth, her lip quivering for

a moment, and her distended eye sparkling on the Secretary, "ever the same theme; oh, it needs not to be thrust upon us, are we blinder than the mole, that we see not the cause whence spring the rebellions, the conspiracies which stalk forever over the fair land of our inheritance? Ah, do not name her name, it is a burden to our waking, no less than a night-mare to our sleeping thoughts. Why is our existence thus embittered, would it be, if we had but one right faithful servant?"

"And there are many among the servants of your Grace!" replied Walsingham, "who would fain free the heart of their royal mistress of this load. To the world they are willing to testify their devotion. What, are the servants of Elizabeth, to behold unmoved the attempts of Mary on her sacred life!"

"Our life!" said Elizabeth, starting. "Much wrong hath been wrought in our kingdom by our cousin's hand, yet think we not she would attempt our life!"

"But if we," returned Walsingham, "have papers in our hands which seem to imply in her such awful guilt, who would gainsay the decree that asketh life for life? Her partisans at least have thirsted for your grace's blood. Shall we suffer her who is even the polar star of their hopes, still to scatter that baleful radiance which we could so easily extinguish for ever?"

"Ah!" said Elizabeth, "but our hand! our name! Oh have a care for them, my Walsingham, let them not be stained with a sister's blood!"

"Said I not, gracious sovereign!" answered Walsingham, "even ere these rash lords broke out into a rebellion, which shall surely be visited on their own heads: said I not that the hunters were abroad, and the lioness well nigh entangled in their toils? And now the snare is tightened round the victim—the arrow which bears death, just parting from the bow. Those foolish youths whom I named,

OF GILSLAND.

have now wrought enough to compass their own destruction, and that of her whom they have sought to save!"

"But the world—the world! how look we to the world?" exclaimed Elizabeth, gasping from the eagerness with which she spoke. "And our precious conscience too—our conscience, which has a price above our crown?"

"Will the world's laws spare a murderer?" interposed Burleigh, "or the conscience of your grace stand free, if from a weak yearning to the side of mercy, a woman's terror at the name of blood, you compromise your servants' safety with your own?"

"Ha! ha! our servants' safety too!" cried Elizabeth, clasping her hands with a bitter laugh. "Well said—our honest, honest Burleigh, keep yourselves safe, and we will, out of pure love and gratitude, bear all the odium of these bloody deeds!"

"It shall not need!" replied Walsingham, passing for obvious reasons the sarcasm of the

Queen's speech, "it shall not need! so plain is the guilt of the Scottish Queen—so plain at least shall it appear, that the voice of English law, shall to the world proclaim that guilt: to the strong arm, and griping sentence of that law, will her frantic partisans be committed to-morrow!"

"Oh fools! fools!" said Elizabeth, "alas, our poor cousin, her friends, are even more baneful to her than her foes. But see you, my lords, if this black conspiracy of Mary, be ripe even for her conviction, then must we indeed be prompt to quell these troubles in the north. Who knows what desperate plot may be formed for her deliverance?"

"Fear we that?" cried Burleigh. "Is it not easy to strangle the bird which is engaged?"

"Be of good heart! most beloved Queen!" said Walsingham, "for all your foes are at once encircled in our net. This outbreak in the north, must needs ruin the madmen who are engaged in it: the foreigner Vitelli has

found it expedient to depart, and Rudolphi is in our good keeping. And more than all, and apart from these follies of the Nevil and the Percy, the victim is surely stricken down : and the safety of the true religion established in your well being !”

“ And when ’tis all done ?” said Elizabeth, “ when the peers have decided, and the law pronounced, then, my Walsingham ! what then ?”

“ What then !” returned the secretary, “ what then remains, but that the sentenced be conducted to their doom !”

During this discussion the Earl of Leicester had been silent, leaving the misgivings of Elizabeth, where her cousin was concerned, to be combatted by the craft, or the wisdom of his associates. Now, however, he leaned forwards, and spoke in a low whispering kind of tone—

“ Oh there are many modes, Sir Francis, by which the sentence of the law may be

executed. Sure, sure and silent modes—a bowl well tempered for succeeding days, who shall trace out its operations, which have worked so secretly, and slow! Blood spilt publicly finds, every drop that falls, a tongue: then check its current with some friendly drug!”

At these words of the Earl, the Queen’s hand which had rested on the table, was clenched with a kind of convulsive earnestness; and her eyes wandered over the countenances of Walsingham and Cecil, with an anxious, piercing look. Both these counsellors, however, dissented from the advice of Leicester, and urged, whatever might be her guilt, that a public trial of the Queen of Scots was necessary, even to the honor of their own mistress Queen Elizabeth. The latter, as they finished speaking, drew a long breath, as though a load were passing from her breast; then she said:—

“We blame not that zeal for our cause in our faithful Leicester, which would urge him

even to propose a justice executed on our hapless cousin, which were indeed in its operation a thought too harsh. But we applaud ye much, trusty Sir Francis, and grave and reverend Cecil; we esteem that care for the honor of your mistress, and your own, which prompts you to condemn a secret justice. Oh, severe justice! Hard is the hap when a nation's good, compels us to abandon an unhappy kinswoman to thy stern decree!"

"Such, gracious mistress, is the lot of sovereigns!" said Lord Leicester. "It is even a price which heaven's impartial care exacts as the penalty of their high estate; that they should resign, as your highness is bound to do in this instance, all their own tender feelings of compassion for their people's good."

"Still, still, my Leicester, is our hap a hard one," cried Elizabeth, rising to dismiss the council. "Oh, heaven be our witness that our heart bleeds for the unhappy Queen of Scots; and that had we no duty to fulfil but towards

ourselves; we would freely pardon every injury she ever has, or ever may commit against us !”

“Fortunate the people !” said Walsingham, whose sovereign thus submits to their welfare, the dictates of her heart !”

“Cecil !” exclaimed the Queen, ere she withdrew to her closet. “Cecil, see that you dispatch strict orders to Sussex, and to Sir George Bowes, for the taming of those northern rebels ! Hang them, Cecil ! hang them ! we will have a gibbet on every rood of land, but we will scare them from their treasons !”

When the Queen had retired, and Burleigh had left the council chamber ; Lord Leicester approached the secretary Walsingham, as he also was preparing to depart.

“Mine excellent friend, Sir Francis,” he said, “believe, that the mode which I proposed for the disposal of that unhappy source of discord, who has so long unsettled our peace, and that of our gracious mistress, is yet worthy of

your more grave consideration. There is full often a pious fitness in expediency, which makes itself evident only to a profound, and rightly ordered, and long deliberating judgment. Will it please you listen to the arguments of a learned divine upon this subject?"

CHAPTER IV.

He mounted himself on a steed so tall,
And her on a fair palfraye,
And slung his bugle about his neck,
And roundly they rode away.

Childe of Elle.

Percy's Reliques.

SADLY meanwhile, in the halls of Raby, past the hours of Gertrude Harding: in vain did she endeavour to nurse in her heart those hopes for her father, which Lord Dacre would have taught her to encourage. Though she knew, alas, too well that she could have rendered no service to him by a stay in London, yet did she feel disposed in some of her reflecting moments to reproach herself with a

want of affection. She felt now as if it would be something to be in London, to be near him, though forbidden to see him, though a prisoner like himself; nor did she forget her cousin Lucy. These self-reproaches of the affectionate maiden were combatted not only by the Countess of Westmoreland, but by the good father Cuthbert; who reminded her that her adventurous journey to the north, had been undertaken with a certainty of being useful to others, while her stay in London could not have advantaged her father, and must certainly have destroyed herself. Nevertheless, the parting assurances of Lord Morden, and her knowledge of that nobleman's great credit with Lord Burleigh, did more, it must be owned, to calm her mind than all the ghostly reasonings of the good father, or the lavish kindness of the Countess. Gertrude had not forgotten the conversation which she had overheard in the turretted house, between the robber Hugh, and Ralph Adams. That Ralph, that false and ungrateful servant, had

been employed by the Earl of Leicester, to decoy her into some snare, she did not doubt ; and as little doubt did she entertain that the strange female who had visited her chamber at Whitehall, was another among the instruments of that nobleman, whose long residence in the palace, had very probably supplied him with a knowledge of every nook and outlet which it contained. Beset with this apprehension of the earl and his minions, Gertrude would not venture out alone even in the environs of Raby. Nor was she altogether free of a terror for Lord Morden ; Cecil was indeed his friend, but if Leicester knew how much he had promoted her escape, would not Leicester be his foe ? It is true Ralph had asserted that the great lord would spare those who had assisted her flight, because that he himself wished not that she should fall into the hands of the Queen. But she had been hitherto safe also from his violence, and now was under honorable protection, and to this, her security, Lord Morden had been instrumental, an

offence which Gertrude could not believe that Leicester would forgive; and the world had already proved that Leicester's concealed enmity was no less dangerous than that which was open and expressed. All these griefs and anxieties, had Gertrude poured into the bosom of the gentle Blanche Norton: yet Blanche seemed dissatisfied, and alleged, that even those griefs were not cause sufficient for the profound melancholy which, since the departure from Raby of the two earls, and Lord Dacre, had clouded for ever the fair brow of the merchant's daughter. But Gertrude was suffering under a reaction of spirit, the natural consequence of that strong excitement into which she had been wrought by her late journey.

"I protest," said Blanche playfully to her one day, about five weeks after the departure of the Earls, "I protest, fair Gertrude, if thou dost not honor us, the forlorn and deserted ladies of Raby, with some of thy bright smiles; I will prefer a complaint against thee to the

good Earls, and their honorable friend, the Baron of Gilsland. In truth, damsel, thou shouldst be a liege vassal to that right noble lord, since that thy father was born upon his land: and to the severe justice of that liege lord, will I assuredly consign thee if thou mend not thy manners ere he return!"

The face of Gertrude varied from red to pale, while she was thus rallied by Mistress Blanche; but the latter was shocked, when as she finished speaking, the maiden fell senseless from her chair. The affectionate lady immediately summoned her waiting maids, and they were yet employed with cold water and essences about the scarce recovered Gertrude, when a loud blast of a horn was heard at the castle gate. A few minutes afterwards, the Countess of Westmoreland entered the apartment, holding an open letter in her hand, and with a countenance expressive of much distress. The letter was from her lord, it did not enter into details, but brief as it was, it betokened a bitter disappointment, and required that the Countess,

with the Lady Percy, and the noble dames in their company, should repair immediately to Durham; where a council of the leaders of the Rising was to be held. A company of horse had been sent by the Earls, to guard the ladies on their way, a desire was also expressed that Father Cuthbert should hasten with them to Durham.

All was now the bustle of preparation within the castle, and while the soldiers were provided with refreshments the ladies made ready to set out.

Meanwhile, Gertrude was persuaded by the gentle Blanche, to accompany her to the castle woods, for the benefit of the fresh morning air, which was now playing over the landscape. Apparelled for their journey, which was to commence in an hour, the fair friends passed unattended through the castle gates. It was one of those unusually fine days on which, even in mid winter, the sun diffuses something of the warmth, no less than of the brightness of summer.

Deep in anxious and sorrowful discourse, as to the motives which impelled the Earls to summon their wives so suddenly to Durham, Gertrude and her companion strolled on, until they had passed the immediate demesne of the castle, and had reached a pleasant ascent half mantled by a thick copse, commanding on one side a prospect of the road to Durham, and stretching on the other hand towards the county of Cumberland. To this spot, Blanche and Gertrude had been for the last week daily in the habit of repairing, for here, at the foot of the acclivity was situate a rustic hermitage, which had sheltered, they were fond to think, some saint of yore. This hermitage was built of huge stones, roughly piled one upon another, almost in the fashion of a grotto; and the lapse of many years, had clad these stones with a mantle of ivy, and moss. Before the hermitage ran a little brook, which, unbound by the sunbeams, from the icy chain which had lately silenced its murmurs, bubbled, clear as chrystal, over the bright pebbles which formed its bed. As

Blanche and Gertrude now approached the hermitage, they were surprised to see a man in the habit of one of the Earl of Westmoreland's retainers, emerge from behind it, and plunge, as if desirous of avoiding observation, into the copse.

Blanche had already her foot upon the threshold of the grotto, when her attention was excited by a female meanly attired, advancing from within, who falling on her knees implored for charity in a piercing tone. The impressive manner, and wild black eyes of this woman, somewhat startled Blanche, and taking out a purse which she had in her bosom, she extended some money to her, as much from an impulse of terror as of compassion. A rustling among the leafless thickets, however, and a scream from Gertrude excited her attention, and looking round, she perceived a group of armed men springing from the thicket, and led by the before named retainer of the Nevils. With their hands locked in each other, Gertrude and her friend both made an effort to fly; but

the endeavour was fruitless, for thereupon the pretended beggar darting to her feet, wrenched them asunder, and twining her arm round the waist of Gertrude, forced her down the declivity, where more men appeared, leading some caparisoned horses.

“None, maiden, ever foiled me twice!” said the strange female in a bitter tone to Gertrude, and in the voice, and in the blazing eyes, she remembered the visitor to her chamber at Whitehall.

In spite of her resistance, Gertrude was now placed on a horse, and secured there by the strong grasp of one of the armed men. The treacherous female mounted another of these horses, and as the party gathered together ere they rode away with their prize, a man on Gertrude’s right hand leaned forwards, till his face came almost in contact with her’s. A devilish sneer was on his lip, and a deadly malice in the low guttural tones in which he exclaimed—

“Be of good cheer, bonny Mistress Ger-

trude ! said they not that so proud a damsel never before lived in London's city bounds ? Be of good cheer, for assuredly thy pride shall be pampered now ; yea, thou shalt be made prouder, by the love of a right noble lord !”

Gertrude screamed at the sound of that voice, and at the sight of that face ; then a swoon, deeper than that which had before alarmed the gentle Blanche, released her for awhile from the horrible consciousness that she was a victim in the hands of Ralph Adams.

As for Blanche, she had not beheld her friend torn from her without emotion. When the hand of Gertrude was wrenched from her clasp, she too uttered a piercing shriek. But she was then fiercely seized herself, and looking up, beheld the false retainer with a naked dagger pointed to her breast. Blanche was of a timid nature, and she forgot even her friend, in the agony with which she besought mercy towards herself.

“ Lady !” said the man, “ I have no wish

to do you harm, but I am bound to keep you silent till my comrades are out of sight, then you may return in security to the castle: my mission concerns not you!"

"Alas, cruel man!" said the lady, "what harm has been done thee by that unoffending maiden, that to rob her of liberty thou must become a traitor to thy lord, and deprive her of his lady's protection!"

"No harm lady!" said the man, with a coarse laugh, "no harm in life, and be assured that no harm is intended to the fair maiden. She is but conveyed even now, to the guard of one who dearly loves her!"

"Alas for such love!" exclaimed Blanche, "my gentle friend, may heaven have mercy on thee!"

"Amen, lady, with all my heart!" said the man; then perceiving that the ravishers of Gertrude had turned a point in the road which led towards the county of Cumberland, he released his grasp of Blanche, and telling her with a sneer that she had now his free leave to return

to the castle; he vaulted on the back of a horse which his comrades had tethered for him to a tree, and galloping away in the direction which they had previously taken, he was himself speedily out of sight, leaving Blanche to hasten with a sorrowful heart to Raby, and relate the fate of her companion.

CHAPTER V.

Now spread thine ancient Westmoreland,
Thy dun bull faine would we spy,
And thou the Erle of Northumberland
Now raise thine half moon up on hye.

But the dun bull is fled and gone,
And the half moon vanished away,
The Erles, though they were brave and bold
Against so many could not stay.

“ Rising in the North.
Percy's Reliques.”

A winter evening was closing over the city of Durham, the wind howled dismally through the narrow streets, and groups of armed men who had been loitering lazily about through the day, were glad to seek warmth and shelter by the blazing fires of the hostels. Among the groups

collected round those fires, there were countenances marked alike by discontent and fear; Murmurings too there were, and a talk of two great armies marching towards Durham, the first commanded by the Lord Hunsdon, the cousin of Queen Elizabeth, and the other led by the Earl of Warwick, and the Lord Admiral of England.

But in a large apartment of a quaint old house near to the cathedral, these matters were yet more gravely and anxiously discussed.

Among those engaged in that discussion, were the Earls of Northumberland, and Westmoreland, with their ladies, the Nortons, the Markenfields, and all the other chiefs of the insurrection, with the exception of Lord Dacre.

In the bitterness of disappointment and despair, had those brave and misused spirits, retreated to hold a council in that old house within the city of Durham. Even as Elizabeth had herself foretold, the English Catholic

gentry had not only failed to respond to the summons of the two Earls, but following the base example of the Earl of Derby, had hastened to betray the confidence of the rash and generous noblemen, who had risked their own lives, chiefly to serve the very people who were so meanly false.

A lamentable instance of that political baseness, and ingratitude, which, with a few noble exceptions, has ever been a distinguishing feature in the character of the Catholics of England; the only religious party who have not been true to their own cause, and by whom every species of obloquy, and ill treatment, is especially reserved for those who have appeared most warmly as their friends.

The armies of Lord Hunsdon, and the Earl of Warwick, were indeed marching against the two Earls, whose forces were thinned by daily desertions; the Catholic gentry hastened to join the standard of Elizabeth, of her who had pronounced their religion to be idolatry, and who persecuted its ministers unto death; and to

crown this terrible reverse, news had arrived that Vitelli had departed from England, that Alva had played them false, and that Sussex, rousing at last from his lethargy, was at the head of a powerful army, treading fast upon their steps.

The gallant Dacre, had for awhile left his friends, to rouse his own people in Cumberland, with him, the life even of their enterprise seemed gone, and dissension, that attendant on failure, had already infused itself into their councils.

The Earl of Northumberland protested that he had not taken up arms against the Queen, but to prevent the threatened arrest of his person, and to insist upon the removal of those ministers, whose pernicious councils were the source of all the evils which the Catholics had endured.

"No, my lord!" said Westmoreland, rising with warmth at these remarks, "no! let us not because, by a fault, a cowardice not our own, we have failed in a noble enterprise, let

us not ourselves debase the dignity of those motives which first led us to the field! Our object I had thought, mine at least I know, was the liberation of the royal Mary, the raising up of God's own ruined altar, the debasement of those parasites, who have long lorded it over the land; and the restoration to its former influence, of a nobility, not newly created like the summer flies, but with hearts warmed with illustrious blood, to sentiments of honour and humanity. Such, my Lord of Northumberland, were my motives, such until now, have I esteemed yours!"

"And such, noble Nevil, were my motives too!" said the elder Norton. "Shame on us, if because we are overtaken by misfortune, we palter with each other, and deny, even among ourselves, those motives which led us to take arms against the tyrannical, and usurped authority of Elizabeth!"

"And what?" said the Earl of Westmoreland, with still greater vehemence, "what is the design which induces our noble colleague

thus to degrade the dignity of our ill-fated enterprise? Does he expect thereby to mollify the wrath of Elizabeth? It were as easy to soothe the tigress when robbed of her young. Away then with such shallow pretexts, which had been unheard of, had our efforts been attended with success!"

"I should be as loth as thyself, proud Nevil!" said Earl Percy, with equal violence, "from stooping to mollify, with base equivocations, the intemperate fury of Elizabeth. It was never a custom of my race, to kiss the rod which they had sought to break; it were an easier task to bend my head to the axe, than to the yoke of the Tudor, and her parasites. Yet do I maintain my former assertion, too much precipitancy has there been in our measures; we might have been assured that our forces could not contend against those of the Queen, it had been well at least to wait for the promised assistance from Alva. And now what is to be done, shall we linger here to witness tamely those who had rallied round

our standard, daily deserting it to rank themselves beneath the banner of our foes? Shall we stay patiently, to be taken like the silly birds in the net of the fowler?—are we to linger till the forces of Hunsdon and Sussex, encircle us on all sides? To my judgment at least, there appears remaining but a single course, bitter is it to pursue, and with bitterness of heart do I propose it. For present safety we must provide by flight; may future time yet yield to us the hour which may avenge our wrongs!”

“Flight!” cried the Earl of Westmoreland, “is such the council of the Percy?”

“Peace, my children!” interposed father Cuthbert. “Preserve at least the blessings of concord among yourselves. It was not for me, when the axe hung suspended by a thread over your necks, it was not for me to discourage any measure, which might, even by a possibility, preserve you from the threatened danger. But alas, I may now say that the result of your enterprise, evil though it be,

is only evil as I apprehended. Why should harsh and bitter terms be bandied among you, had others but been true to you, even as ye have been to each other, very different had been your condition now. Impose not the blame of this ill success upon yourselves, but upon those who are the very recreants of their own faith, whose stubborn and unworthy love of self, leaves their brethren in that faith to perish by the halter and the sword, while they hug themselves in a sluggish security, or yet worse, lend their aid to strengthen that power by which you fall. Thus did I surmise that you would be abandoned in the hour of your utmost need; yet I blame you not that ye hoped for other results than such abandonment. If there be not ten gentlemen in these counties who are not of the ancient faith, who indeed that knew them not, as well as I do, could have thought that they would have tendered their swords to her who oppressed that faith, and turned them against those brethren

who sought to uphold it at deadly peril to themselves!"

Something more of calmness was induced among the disputants, by these remarks of Cuthbert, the justice of which, none present could dispute. After much debate it was finally resolved, that no better course remained than for the leaders in the rising to depart in all possible speed for Scotland, and seek for shelter among the border clans, the tried, and enthusiastic partisans of the ill-fated Mary. The elder Norton, when this measure was resolved upon, wrung his hands, and burst into a flood of tears; his son, Marmaduke, had a few minutes before left the council chamber. Various preliminaries were now adjusted; the soldiers, who had yet remained faithful to their cause, were to be disbanded, and recommended to return with all speed to their respective homes; a body of five hundred horse was to be retained, to escort the fugitives, and if they themselves willed it, to accompany them to Scotland. At this point

of the conversation, the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Lord Dacre appeared, accompanied by Marmaduke Norton. Some excitement was visible in the countenances of both. Lord Dacre had ridden long and hard, and had but just arrived at Durham; he was half armed, wearing a cuirass, and head piece of polished steel; a mantle of scarlet cloth, lined with fur, was thrown, in the Spanish fashion, across his shoulder. With a firm, but hasty step, he approached the council table, and Blanche Norton, as she looked up, perceived his brow contracted to a frown, and darkened by a glow, either of anger or surprise. Silence fell upon the lately warm speakers, and they seemed almost to shrink beneath the piercing eye of Leonard Dacre; the silence was broken by himself.

“Is this true, my gentle friends? can it be that, without one more effort for the right cause, ye have resolved to flee before the forces of the tyrant Tudor? Speak noble Westmoreland, and loyal Percy, say that our Marmaduke

did not hear aright, but not that ye are thus inconstant to yourselves!"

"Illustrious friend!" said the Earl of Westmoreland, "valiant, and never daunted Dacre, think us not so unworthy of our own names, or of association with your generous spirit, that on aught but a stern necessity we would abandon that cause to which we have allied ourselves at so dear a price. But you, perhaps, have yet to learn how we have been deserted; how left to brave with scarce a hand in our behalf, those accumulated forces which are now marching against us. It were foolhardiness, and not bravery, to linger here!"

"Nay!" answered Leonard Dacre; "I have heard it all; before I met my friend Marmaduke, I heard how the recreants, miscalled of our faith, had deserted your standard, to flock round that of the usurper. That such might possibly be the event of our summons for their assistance, you may remember that I foretold. But I, my lord, relied less than you did upon their aid, and more upon the energy of

our own efforts. Ah, too well do I know them, ever prompt to aid the winning side. Oh, dear friends, believe the advice which I now offer is less desperate than it seems; let your banners on the morrow spread boldly to the breeze, —gather around them that brave remnant of your forces, who yet abide by you, who will do so even unto death; each single hand in such a gallant host, shall equal three among the mercenary troops of Elizabeth, they who fight only for fear, for plunder, or for pay. By such a vigorous proceeding you may yet intercept the army of Sussex, ere he is joined by the Earl of Warwick, and what though your forces be still somewhat inferior in point of numbers to his, fear not, there is a price above numbers in the valor of those who yet abide by our cause, and the spirit of heroes will animate them all. More than life would I stake upon the risk that thus opposed, the hirelings of Sussex would fall like ripe corn beneath the hand of the reaper. Then should you see of what material they are, these spaniels cringing to the

hand which strikes: these sycophants of bloated power! Let but success attend your arms, dear lords, in one brief, brilliant action, and then these slaves, these idolaters of authority, no matter by what means acquired, or possessed, will discover the justice of your cause!"

A murmur arose as Lord Dacre ceased speaking, and anxiously did he gaze around the circle, confident as he was in the belief that such a bold effort as that which he advised, might yet redeem them all. But the dissentient voices prevailed, the Earls would not risk an action with the superior army of Sussex, and the flight into Scotland was again insisted on. Sorrow and indignation, now struggled for a mastery, in the expressive countenance of Leonard Dacre.

"Alas, ill-fated Mary!" he exclaimed, "on what a quicksand dost thou rest thy foot! And you too, rash lords, pause even for your own sakes, if not for hers! remember that you are already as much destroyed, as you may be

while preserving life; strike again, if but for the credit of your race! leave not the rich lands of your inheritance a prey to the upstart, and the stranger! if Elizabeth gain the victory, let her feel that it was dearly bought!"

"It is in vain, Lord Dacre!" said the Earl of Northumberland, "your sanguine temper creates hope where none exists, to attempt resistance, is to offer our lives, as well as our lands, to glut the vengeance of the Queen."

"Then!" said Lord Dacre, "I am to understand, that you, my lord, retreat from this enterprise!"

"Even so!" replied the Earl.

"Then!" returned Lord Dacre, looking round the circle, "is there yet in this fair company, one gentleman who will strike a blow for honor and Queen Mary, or must I alone, lead my brave borderers to the charge?"

"Not alone, valiant Dacre!" said young Marmaduke Norton, pressing yet closer to his friend.

"Not alone!" responded the old man, and the rest of his brave sons.

Many more of the knights and gentlemen, professed their determination, since the Earls would not proceed farther in the affair, to abide by the standard of Lord Dacre.

"God help you, my children!" said Father Cuthbert, "I fear this will be but a wanton sacrifice of life!"

It was now proposed by Leonard Dacre, that Blanche Norton, with the ladies of those gentlemen who had determined with him, still to oppose the power of Elizabeth, should with the Countesses Percy and Nevil, retire into Scotland till the event was decided. This proposal was relished by none, and most vehemently opposed by the commonly gentle Blanche, to whom a separation from her husband, appeared as an evil far greater than any other which she could by possibility encounter. It was when she first advanced with these remonstrances, that Lord Dacre, casting his eyes more curi-

ously over the fairer portion of the circle, marked the absence of one face fairer far than all. It was then, in a voice broken by her tears, that Blanche made known to him, the strange manner in which Gertrude Harding had been torn away; but when he really understood that no trace could be obtained of the ravishers of the maiden, an almost convulsive expression of agony and alarm, agitated his features, he meditated for a few moments, and then whispered to Blanche, that he thought he had surmised the author of the outrage.

“ Alas ! alas ! poor maiden, sweet and innocent maiden ! ” he exclaimed, half unconsciously, “ woe was the day when I mixed thee with matters so beyond thy state ; safe wast thou in thy lowliness, and now I who have so endangered thee, may scarcely hope to save ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

Aye, but to die, and go we know not where,
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

THE light of a winter morning was just beginning to break into the prison cell of Bertha Allen, for many weeks had she been the wretched inmate of that prison, and she had now been for three days under sentence of death.

She had been doomed as a traitress to the Queen, in having for some time before she disclosed it, had knowledge of the projected rising in the north. During her imprisonment,

and on her trial, Bertha had looked in vain for her powerful paramour to shield her from the fierce penalties of the law. More than once, indeed, he had been present during her examinations, present when she had quailed under the keen questioning of Walsingham, and Burleigh; and in the fond hope that he would yet interfere to save her, she had not hinted at her intimacy with him. But when hope was no more—when she was doomed to die; then in the bitterness of her rage and despair, she cursed him as her destroyer, for heaven, and on earth, and strove to implicate him in her political offence; her judges laughed at the allegation, and Bertha could not even gratify her malice. In the solitude of her prison, however, in the agonies of the awful three days which intervened between her sentence, and its execution, the rage of her spirit, its ardent longing for revenge, was subdued in the desperation of her fears, in her horror at the near approach of death; and under the influence of these fears, and of this horror, she besought

her jailer to convey for her a message, entreating her lover to visit her once more. For this service the wretched woman had no reward to offer, for she had been stripped of her money, and trinkets, when first conveyed to the prison.

But jailers have perhaps less flinty hearts than is commonly supposed, and the miseries of the sufferer prevailed on this man to bear the desired message. Nor was this a light office of compassion, for the paramour of Bertha was a proud and powerful lord, most like to turn a deaf ear to the suppliant, who was a poor man.

Bertha knew the heart of her lover now, and she therefore baited her request with an assurance that she had a secret to tell, which was of importance to the fate of John Harding, for she knew that the haughty lord was interested in the destiny of that old man.

There was an insanity in Bertha's hope, though the sentence had been pronounced.

though the morning of execution had arrived, she half flattered herself, that would her lover but deign to visit her dungeon, that her tears, her entreaties, might soften his heart, and that his power would be even then all sufficient to save her. Ah with what agony the miserable woman had counted each weary minute of the night, with what frightful rapidity did the prison clock seem to tell off the few wretched hours which yet remained to her on earth! The light of dawn had now appeared, and the heart of Bertha was torn by a yet more harrowing fear, her cruel lover would not come, he had denied her poor and last request. In this supposition she was deceived, an hour before the time appointed for her execution, she heard the key grating in her dungeon door, and her paramour, disguised as usual, stood before her.

“ Ah, you would come, I knew, I knew you would, and you will save me yet, my own sweet lord !”

"Poor Bertha!" said her lover. "But what, what have you to tell me of John Harding?"

"Only that I know no harm of that old man: indeed, dear lord, my hate of him was but a mode of my hatred to his daughter, and I only hated her for love of thee!"

"And is this all?" said the nobleman, "have you no proof, no clue to promise me, nought that may counterbalance the favor, which Cecil is disposed to show to the merchant? Nothing to tell which may bring him as you are now, under the severest sentence of the law? Cannot you furnish me with some proof abstracted from your own assertions, that he has had dealing with Rudolphi?"

"Alas, no!" replied Bertha, "could I do so would it save my life?"

"It might be so!" answered her lover more coldly, "but I must have a proof beyond your own assertion!"

"Alas! alas! and I have it not, I have it

not to give!" exclaimed Bertha, wringing her hands in despair. "But, dear lord, it does not need that to save me; a word, one word from your kind lip would be I know enough!"

"As once before I told you, you overrate my influence much!" said the peer, forcing himself from her clasping hands.

"Must I die then! must I die?" said the woman. "Why am I to be led to the gibbet, when the false foreigner, Rudolphi, has escaped?"

"Truly!" replied her visitor, "because Rudolphi had a good store of gold, with which to buy the favor of his judges!"

"Will gold buy safety then," said Bertha with an hysteric scream, "oh cruel, cruel, and you have so much, and will you venture none to save me!"

"Wherefore woman should I buy thy safety?" said her lover, "hast thou not done all that thy poor malice could to injure me? For what end were designed those frantic ex-

clamations, when thy stony judges sentenced thee to die? That a tale might be carried to the jealous Queen, how thy fair face had tempted me some time, into those light oaths, she fain would think my lips have never whispered save to herself! Bertha thou hadst not been caught in this net, save from thine own weak jealousy of Gertrude Harding. Why should I peril wealth, or name for thee? Thou art a toy which I am wearied of!"

"Then thou hast come here not—" gasped the woman, "not with one spark of pity for me within thy merciless heart, but only in the hope that I could furnish thee with proofs, which might detain John Harding in that prison from which thy enemy Cecil, rather wills that he should be free?"

"Even so!" replied the nobleman; "in truth Bertha, you overrate my power, no earthly friendship may avail you now."

The miserable creature clasped her hands, and casting upwards one look of unutterable

anguish, she sunk without motion at her destroyer's feet : while he, surveying her with an expression rather of satisfaction, that he was released from her further importunities, than of any compassion for her suffering, hastily quitted the dungeon.

There was a great bustle in the streets of London that day, for it was said that a band of conspirators, who in union with the Queen of Scots, had formed a design upon the life of Elizabeth, were then to undergo their first examination. It was understood, that these conspirators were all young men of rank and birth, and as it had been also said, that their treason was not connected with the northern rising, a great curiosity prevailed. From all parts of London, the people thronged towards the palace of Whitehall, there to loiter about the gates, each eager to be the first to learn the names of the conspirators ; and many alas, trembling with an apprehension that among those names, they might hear that of some

beloved friend. Through this crowd of people, slowly endeavoured to force their way, a strange looking old man, with a female hanging on his arm; but whether she were young, or old, beautiful, or the reverse, her closely drawn hood, and wrapping cloak forbade the spectators to determine.

Some struggling and scuffling there was amongst the crowd, for it was not forgotten by the curious, that there were other offenders against her Grace, to be hanged that morning at Tyburn; and in the Strand, while some endeavoured to force their way forwards with all possible speed, anxious to be among the first who arrived at Whitehall; others as pertinaciously hurried on in the opposite direction, designing to meet the unfortunate convicts at the top of the Chepe, whence, with that fine taste and feeling, for which the mob have been in all ages remarkable, they intended to accompany them on their journey to Tyburn. Though animated by far other than such motives, the old man, and the

female who accompanied him, were equally anxious to see those prisoners; they did not speak, but the hand of the woman often trembled violently on the arm of her companion. On reaching the top of the Chepe, they found the multitude to be so great that the procession to Tyburn had been interrupted, a cavalcade too, of men and horses, gaily caparisoned, came at the moment rattling up from the city, and loud and hard words were exchanged between these people, and the conductors of the convicts. The old man and his companion, had been forced into the foremost rank of the crowd, a position, which though it highly favored their design of seeing the condemned prisoners, was yet almost dreaded by the female on account of its publicity. Of these prisoners, who were dragged upon a hurdle, two were men, sentenced, said the crowd, for robbing on the highway, the third was a female, no other than the miserable Bertha Allen.

“Heaven be thanked!” whispered the old

man's companion, "my father and my uncle are not among these unhappy people. But I pray you, good Master Williams, declare whether mine eyes deceive me, or if that haggard, wretched looking woman, be not our sometime gay Mistress Allen!"

"In faith, my gentle Lucy," replied Master Williams, "yonder is I think indeed Mistress Allen, good lack! good lack! and is it come to this? she could never let the concerns of her neighbours alone, and such is the end of her meddlings. Well, 'tis an ill wind that blows nobody good, and a joyful day must this be for Master Allen! We knew indeed that the dame was condemned, but I thought not it would come to this!"

Lucy scarce attended to these remarks, she was for the time unconscious of everything but the pitiable condition of Bertha. The malevolent disposition of that woman had not indeed escaped the observation of even the gentle Lucy: and she had on more than one occasion perceived that this malevolence was

especially directed against her cousin Gertrude ; but she had not imagined the extent of Bertha's malice, nor could she without a mingled sensation of pity and horror, behold in so lamentable a state, a person who had sat at her father's board, and drunk of his cup. As for Bertha, she was apparently unconscious of the scene around her, her hands were fastened ignominiously behind her back, her fair hair—that hair of which she used to be so vain—hung in tangled masses about her shoulders, and her eyes, though not closed, had in them a glassy, unconscious stare.

Meanwhile the cavilling between the horsemen and the officers still continued.

“ Drag thy gallows ware out of the way, fellows !” said one of the former, “ if thou dost not give place to my lord, he will brain thee with his riding whip !”

“ Take thyself out of the way, and let thy lord go with thee !” said the officer, “ what will come next, if the servants of her Grace,

and of the good city of London, are to be interrupted in their duty, by a troop of saucy Jacks such as thou, with a rantipole lord, to bear thee out in thy brags!"

"We shall see, we shall see, fellows!" said the servant, still endeavouring to make way, while out of pure perverseness, and to block up his road, the officers ordered the hurdle to be drawn forwards. At this moment three more horsemen came galloping up the Chepe, one of whom was the nobleman alluded to; he haughtily bade the officers make way as he advanced, and those worthies recognising in him the chief favorite of their Queen, the Earl of Leicester, thought proper to gulp down the affronts which his retainers had offered to their dignity, and command the hurdle to be drawn aside, that the Earl might pass. His name, however, repeated by the crowd, caught the ear of the female convict; her face then lost its apathy, and became in a moment agitated with all the frenzy of

hope: she screamed wildly, and struggled to free her hands from the cord which confined them.

“ Dear lord! sweet lord!” she cried, “ you come to save me now! I knew, I knew you would !”

This petition from a miserable convict to the proud Earl of Leicester, might possibly have excited some animadversion among the people, but the woman’s sudden scream had the effect of partly startling the horse which Leicester rode, and the curveting of the spirited animal, putting the burley Londoners in some trepidation for their limbs, the form of Bertha’s address to him past unnoticed.

Among those the most perilled by the prancing horse, were the gentle Luey and worthy Master Williams; in the confusion, her hood fell back, and Leicester’s quick eye catching a glimpse of a beautiful face, he condescended himself to express a hope that she was not hurt; having first sternly bade

the officers proceed with the still screaming and sobbing convict.

“ Oh not hurt at all, please your lordship’s worshipful grace !” said Master Williams ; then he whispered to Lucy, “ say you are not hurt, my dear ! say you are not hurt !”

Lucy who was quite as desirous to avoid the notice of Lord Leicester as her old friend could possibly desire, complied very readily with his injunctions : but the Earl had now recognised her, and bending from his saddle, he said in a low tone—

“ It may be, gentle maid, that you may find, ere long, a word from Lord Leicester may do much service to those whom you love ; my door shall not be closed when you are a petitioner !”

With these words he turned his horse’s head towards St. Paul’s, and galloped away, followed by his gaily attired attendants. The hurdle upon which the miserable Bertha was conveyed to her doom, was already out of sight,

and that portion of the mob which had been hitherto engaged in gaping at Lord Leicester and his splendid equipments, now hastened to follow the rest towards Tyburn.

It was at this moment, when the Chepe was comparatively deserted, that two men approached Lucy and her old friend. In one of these she knew the young Warden of the City Watch, Edward Wood, and the slouched hat and large cloak of his companion, could not screen Henry Willoughton from her.

"You have played me false, love!" she said, as he took her arm while she turned in the direction which Lord Leicester had taken.

"Pardon me, mine own sweet love!" said Henry, "but I could not resolve to trust you in the dangerous streets of this city, with no other protector than our worthy Master Williams!"

"Yet, Henry, at what fearful peril to yourself are you abroad!" she said.

"Fear not, dearest," he answered "none will know me thus disguised."

"But, Henry, you would not sure go with us to Whitehall?"

"Truly, fair damsel, where thou goest, I must follow!"

"Fear not, Mistress Lucy," said the Warden, "the crowd about the palace will be too much occupied with prisoners, to notice Master Willoughton. I am going thither myself, and I think he may even venture in our company."

"In sooth, Master Harry!" said the little tailor, "I am right glad of thy coming, I liked not the looks of my Lord of Leicester, at thy fair Lucy, oh, he is an ogre, that proud lord, a roaring lion, seeking out maidens to devour!"

The matter being thus settled, the party hastened towards the Strand. It may here be observed, that not long after Lucy had so happily met her lover in his house at Charing, the little taylor, Master Williams, had arrived there; to Charing he was indeed hastening

when he spoke to Lucy in the street. Every day since the concealment of Willough-ton in his subterranean dwelling, he had been visited by this eccentric, but kind creature, who not only had supplied him with food and other necessaries in his retreat, but had, in conjunction with Edward Wood, carefully collected and detailed to him as much of the gossip of the day, as seemed at all to bear upon the fate of John Harding, and his brother-in-law, Fenton: of Gertrude, no more was known in London, than that she had escaped. Her father, and her uncle thus in prison, and her cousin fled no one knew where, Lucy had but little to urge against the arguments of her lover, when he implored her to divide with him his retreat; which as it had hitherto been, would no doubt remain secure. When, however, the taylor mentioned that examination which was to take place at Whitehall, and that some persons condemned as connected with the Rising, were to be the next day executed at Tyburn, no entreaties of Henry could either dissuade Lucy

from an attempt to see those prisoners, or win her consent that he should accompany her upon an expedition so hazardous. Wearied by her importunities, he at last consented to trust her to the escort only of Master Williams, but no sooner had he calculated that they were well through the village of Charing, than in defiance of every danger to himself, he left the house to follow them. On reaching Whitehall, Lucy and her companions found an immense crowd there assembled. The chief prisoners, they heard it said, had not yet been brought from the Tower; but that some other delinquents were even then under the examination of the council: the names of the prisoners had not yet transpired. A violent crush of the people, soon after the arrival at Whitehall of Lucy, and her friends, announced the approach of the prisoners. They were surrounded by a strong body of guards, but as in the case of Bertha, Lucy, by her position in front of the crowd was enabled to obtain a distinct view of their persons. But what was her emotion when she

beheld, conducted first, distinguished by a mournful precedence, her wounded companion in the cottage of Cicely, the gentle, and romantic Hubert. After him were led five or six other gentlemen, among whom she recognised his friend Layton, and the procession was closed by poor Walter and his wife. Lucy pressed the hand of her lover, but amid that crowd she did not dare to intimate the discovery which she had made: all she could venture, was to implore him to remain at the palace gates, till the examination should be past.

CHAPTER VII.

Thus do all traitors,
If their purgation did consist in words,
They are as innocent as grace itself.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

BUT what meanwhile was passing in the council chamber? Elizabeth herself was there, with her favorite counsellors. Lord Morden too, though not a member of the council, sat at a little table behind Cecil's chair, and was occasionally directed by him to make a note of the proceedings.

By one of those incongruities for which it is so difficult to account, this frank and generous young nobleman was a favorite with the wily

Burleigh; it might be that Cecil felt that his cause required the support of some few such winning spirits, men whose hearts were not like his own, worn within the brain.

At that moment stood before the council two old men; one appeared convulsed with terror, and grief, his hands were locked in each other, and when he spoke, the faint sound of his voice was scarce distinguishable.

"Have you no more to say, Richard Fenton in your defence?" demanded Sir Francis Walsingham, of the old man.

"Alas, honorable sir, no more!" replied the goldsmith, "may heaven be my witness that I harbored no thought of treason against her Grace! alas! the heart that was half broken by the loss of a beloved, and only child, was no abiding place for treasonous plots; I think it were hard to bring proof of treason against me; the gibbet, if I am condemned to it, will but a little shorten those days, which sorrow for my child, more than age, has already numbered."

"And what say you, John Harding?" said

the Secretary, turning to the other prisoner. "You have been convicted of holding converse with the traitor Leonard Dacre of Gilsland, now in arms against the sacred authority of her Grace; it may be well believed that you were aware of his projected treason. It is known that your daughter, the damsel Gertrude, visited the foreigner Vitelli; and that she was then the bearer of some missive from Leonard, admits of no doubt, for we have it on the confession of Rudolphi, that he had been employed as an agent to introduce into England, arms and ammunition, wherewith to aid the traitorous Dacre! How much of this charge does thy innocence, or audacity prepare thee to deny?"

The hardships of imprisonment had not worn down John Harding to that destitution of mind and body, which was exhibited by his brother-in-law; he stood before the council fully surmising, and with a spirit nerved to brook, all the severity of the extreme sentence, which he doubted not that they would pass.

He acknowledged his communion with Leonard Dacre, and that his daughter had indeed visited Vitelli; but neither of these circumstances, he said, unsupported by other facts, could convict him of treason against her Grace.

"Insolent traitor!" said Elizabeth "dost thou dare to palter with us, on what errand was it, that thine infamous daughter visited Vitelli, did she bear no message from the Dacre? speak traitor, or we will have thee presently on the rack!"

"It needs not, royal lady!" said the merchant, raising his still clear, blue eyes to the face of the Queen, with a calmness which did but exasperate her already boiling rage. "It needs not," he repeated, "my child did indeed bear a letter to the ambassador!"

"This to our face!" screamed Elizabeth, then she added with a bitter oath, "Oh, that we had the traitress in our power, she should die by inches, we would tear her limb meal ourselves!"

"May it please your Grace!" said John Harding, with imprudent courage, "had it not been for the heroism even of that humble damsel, your own royal life had not been spared for the execution of such a threat!"

Elizabeth at this rejoinder fell back in her seat, actually dumb with astonishment and wrath; her lips trembled, and her eyes glared at the merchant as if she were really in doubt as to his words. At length her fury found a tongue, she turned upon Cecil with a torrent of imprecations.

"Dolt! villain! miscreant!" were the mildest epithets she used. "And this too!" she said, "is the fellow to whom thou wouldst have us show our royal mercy!"

"It were mercy, indeed, unfittingly bestowed!" remarked Leicester, who sat as usual at her elbow. A bitter smile crossed the lip of Harding, as the earl thus spoke.

"Oh, oh! but he shall have mercy too!" said Elizabeth. "We would not be in debt

to his wench, and he shall have his life at our hands: we doubt not she has joined the traitors in the north, and let him seek her valorous company. Albeit we will not leave him in our debt: see you, Sir Francis, that all his wealth be made confiscate to us. Then it is our royal command that he be scourged from Cheping, to the Charing Cross, and branded as a traitor on the brow: let him then go and seek his gallant wench! Away with him! and for his companion, who seems more fool than traitor after all, lead him to prison, but use him not severely; there is but little harm in him we think!"

This order of the Queen was immediately obeyed; but instead of being led to an immediate execution of their sentence, John Harding and his brother-in-law were conducted to an anti-chamber of the palace, there to remain until after the examination of the other prisoners.

The fair haired young man whom Lucy had

known by the name of Hubert, was first conducted, with the gentlemen, his fellow prisoners, before the council; Cicely and her husband being detained in an outer room.

The youth Hubert had previously been examined at the Tower, when from the observation now addressed to him by Walsingham, it appeared that he had denied his guilt. As he was now led towards the table, the Secretary took from it the reliquary, the silver crucifix which Gertrude had found in the house inhabited by Vitelli.

“Now, traitor!” he exclaimed, “wilt thou deny thy treason more! This Popish symbol has been sworn to as thy property, it was found by a servant of Lord Leicester’s in that house where the Italian Vitelli dwelt. The ciphered scroll which it contained, and which so audaciously proposed to the Scottish Queen, the murder of her beneficent and royal sister, accords with those other treasonable papers which

are already in our hands. Anthony Babington wilt thou longer deny thy guilt?"

The sudden nature of this charge, the undoubted and present proof, startled the misguided and unfortunate youth.

"There was but one," he faltered, "but one among the ministers of your usurped authority, who met me in that fatal house! and how he obtained access to it I know not!" As he spoke thus, the eye of the young man rested on the face of the Earl of Leicester.

"Weak youth!" exclaimed Cecil, "know that the engines of our power, are alike countless and unseen. We knew that the old house in Blackfriars had many a secret lurking place, and from the hour even that it was hired by thy friend Mancini, for the dwelling of his master, from that hour was the piercing eye of justice fixed upon thee, and on thy movements. Nay, we knew thee likewise, for the assassin who sought the sacred life of her Highness, rememberest thou when dripping and bewil-

dered, thou didst rest thy guilty head in the lone chamber of that house?"

"Aye!" replied Babington, "and the knife of the assassin that shone even amid the gloom! Who then was the spy, that threw me bleeding, and as he thought dead, beneath the vaults of that house?"

"That spy!" said Leicester, "was a righteous servant of mine own, one who would fain walk in the way of the Lord; nor did he leave thee, traitor, in the vault, but to seek assistance to bear thee to that prison which was thy only fitting habitation, but it mattered not that thine evil associates had removed thee ere his return; for the twig was already limed which was to ensnare thee. Even from thine own trusted associate did we gain a knowledge of thy retreat."

"From Mancini!" exclaimed Babington, "ah, let me see him, and shame for his treachery shall kill him, as he looks on that friend whom he has betrayed!"

"It may not be!" replied Walsingham,

“ that youth was seized when preparing to set out for Italy after his master, Vitelli, and he died but two days since upon the rack !”

“ All is lost then ” said Babington, with the fire of his incipient insanity, flashing wildly in his large blue eyes, then, turning to the Queen, who had hitherto listened to his examination in intense and silent interest, he exclaimed—

“ Yes, tigress of the west, I would indeed have slain thee had it so been willed : for thy death would have been the life of many ! But the task is vouchsafed to a worthier hand !

“ Bear hence the traitor !” cried Elizabeth.

But as Babington was dragged from the apartment, he looked towards his companions, who were left behind—

“ Poor friends ! poor friends !” he said, “ ’tis but for you I mourn !”

The other prisoners were now examined, and that youth whom Lord Dacre had encountered in his journey to Tutbury, and who

had visited Babington in his retreat at the cottage, was arraigned by the name of Tichborne. As Lord Dacre had suspected, he had been betrayed by Giffard ; the letter which he had conveyed to Mary had been sent by that traitor to Walsingham, to whom also the reply of the Queen had been submitted, ere it was suffered to reach the hands of the confederates. It was by such artifices that the secretary obtained that opportunity of interpolating the letters of the captive, which afterwards supplied him with a pretext on which to implicate her with the darker portion of Babington's conspiracy, that portion which aimed at the life of Elizabeth.

The unfortunate Tichborne denied all intent to take the life of the Queen, admitting that he had designed to liberate Mary, but even into that attempt he said he had been led by what he could not but consider an innocent compassion, for the sufferings of that Princess, and by his warm friendship for Babington.

When the wretched prisoners had all been

conveyed out of the council chamber: the Queen turned to Cecil, and observing that a trial must certainly convict them, swore that they should have other than the common punishment of traitors—"to be hanged and quartered were too light a doom."

"May it please your grace," said Cecil, hesitatingly, "it were not well to interfere with the common course of the law, which has ever been held in such a case to impose a penalty severe enough!"

"How say you, Sir Francis?" then enquired the Queen of Walsingham.

"Even with my sage colleague, gracious madam!" replied the secretary. "It were neither wise, nor just, to depart from the customary sentence of the law, upon this occasion!"

"So then let it be!" said the Queen. "But see that there be no false mercy shown the villains in the execution of that law, by which our wise counsellors have such a dainty

desire to abide, such penance as the law imposes shall 'be protracted in their case, even to the extremity of pain. And in full sight of the people too, let them have notice of what traitors earn!" "

Cicely and her husband were next examined; the woman it appeared had been Babington's nurse, but as it seemed that they had given him shelter without having any knowledge of his conspiracy, they were simply committed to prison until after his trial.

Poor Lucy meanwhile had suffered the most torturing anxiety, till the re-appearance of the prisoners. Nor were the exclamations of the mob in any way calculated to relieve her apprehensions, the emissaries of the government having been for the last few weeks busily employed in exciting all possible horror of the Papists and their plots; hence a thousand bitter execrations against the professors of her own faith were poured into her startled ears. But when the prisoners were again led from the palace, and it was understood

that they were to be tried in a few days, then it was that the frenzy of the popular feeling rose to its height, and the officers had some difficulty in defending their charge. Lucy saw the wretched Babington and his associates, and heard their real names; she perceived too the woe-stricken countenance of Cicely, absorbed in grief for the coming doom of her foster son. But after these prisoners were led John Harding and Richard Fenton; and the spirits of Lucy, weakened both by anxiety and illness, at once failed when she beheld her beloved father and uncle. She did not even hear those whispers among the crowd which told the nature of their doom, but uttering a deep sigh sunk senseless in her lover's arms.

CHAPTER VIII.

The wind is up ; hark ! how it howls ! methinks,
Till now, I never heard a sound so dreary !

Roused from their slumbers
In grim array, the grisly spectres rise,
Grim horrible, and obstinately sullen,
Pass, and repass, hushed at the foot of night.

BLAIR.

THE abductors of Gertrude took their way across the country, keeping still by the most lonely and unfrequented paths, avoiding the towns, and stopping only at way side hostels for rest ; for they carried with them an ample stock of provisions. To the strange female, who was addressed as Mistress Euphrasia, all others of the party, even the insolent and

fanatic Ralph, seemed to defer with a respect that implied on her part an absolute authority. To the compassion of this woman, Gertrude once attempted to appeal; this was when she recovered from that swoon into which she had fallen at finding herself in the power of the execrable Ralph. Her solicitations for pity were however received with so bitter a sneer, with such a stern and contemptuous indifference, that as the proud heart of Gertrude swelled in her breast, she resolved, whatever might be her doom, to that woman she would never stoop to plead for pity more. Occasionally in the course of their journey she caught the black eyes of Euphrasia fixed upon her face, with an expression so piercing, it seemed as though she designed to read the minutest workings of her captive's soul; but the sunny hazel orbs of Gertrude, could flash with indignation too, and more than once did the haughty Euphrasia avert her head, when her looks met those of the maiden.

Thus they journeyed for two days, the

barren moor, the foaming torrent, the dark, and leafless woods being the alternate companions of their way. Towards the close of the second day, they entered a wild district, tracking the course of an impetuous river, which foamed its way over fragments of rocks, and through darkly wooded glens. Suddenly they emerged upon a valley, the sides of which rose in gentle acclivities, clothed with trees, and with the river wandering at its foot; amid these trees, Gertrude thought that she could discover the decaying towers of a monastery, or castle. Her conductors, however, leaving this valley to the right, again plunged amid chaotic rocks, and glens, resembling those among which they had hitherto travelled. The renewed roaring of the river, betokened that its course was again taken over rocks and stones, and decaying trunks of trees; and presently, Euphrasia, who rode first, and appeared as the guide of the party, began a winding descent into a deep glen. On one side of this glen the river rushed along its course, its

waters edged with a feathery foam, and overhung by heights whose summits were veiled by the floating mists; sometimes these heights were fringed by large clumps of holly, their long branches now richly clustered with coral berries, or an oak coppice descended even to the water's edge; again rose perhaps, in an almost perpendicular ascent from the river, fantastic masses of bare and broken rocks, heaped together in strange confusion. To the left of the river, the glen stretched away in a rugged succession of swelling knolls, and deep hollows, clad with the prickly furze, and here and there enlivened with a patch of the perpetually recurring holly; while far as the eye could reach, woods as thick as those which overhung the river, closed above the glen, and seemed to shut it out from communication with the world beyond. Copses of hazel, and hawthorn, also abounded in this glen, and Gertrude and her conductors, rode over heaps of the withered leaves. The holly boughs too, and the ivy

that hung upon the clustering thickets, were dripping with the vapors that came steaming from the earth, and which spread like a thin blue veil over the sharp and steep acclivities. The path which they were pursuing, gradually descended, and at length through the encroaching shadows, Gertrude perceived situated on one of those knolls which dotted the surface of the glen, an ancient and dreary looking house.

The malicious Ralph Adams, was not slow to inform her, that that dismal tenement was to be the boundary of her journey.

"Mistress Gertrude!" he said, "will it not please thee to return thanks with us, that the Lord in his bounty hath permitted us to arrive at our desired home, unmolested by the men of Belial, the Papists, who are in arms against the good cause, and who might by chance have taken thee from our hands!"

"Peace wretch!" replied Gertrude, then turning to Euphrasia she said, "may it please

you, madam, to vouchsafe me at least so much courtesy, as may release me from the importunate speech of this man!"

Thus appealed to, Euphrasia administered to Ralph a sharp rebuke; and they rode on in silence to the lonely house. As Gertrude now looked up at it, she perceived that it had in it nothing of the dignity of a baronial mansion, nor even that air of consequence which might betoken it to have belonged to one among the superior class of the gentry. It was a low roofed building, the outer walls constructed of huge blocks of granite, and these walls were thickly clustered with ivy, which creeping over the casements, seemed likely to exclude even that scanty portion of light which their narrow dimensions would admit.

A portion only of this building, rose to the dignity of a second story, the door was low browed, and studded even on the exterior, with immense knobs of iron. A broken wall marked the boundary of what had once perhaps been

the garden, but weeds, and tangled shrubs, usurped the place of such hardy fruits, and flowers, as could ever have flourished in so sterile a situation. One of the attendants now dismounting, knocked at the door of the dwelling, presently a light flashed upon the lower casements, and was succeeded by the sound of heavy bars, and bolts being withdrawn.

"Is all prepared?" enquired Euphrasia in a haughty tone, of a man who opened the door.

"Aye, mistress!" he replied: and Gertrude was then assisted to dismount from her horse, and led into the house. She was first conducted into a long apartment, where the bare walls and rafters were visible, and which had apparently been of old the kitchen of the habitation, here blazed a large fire, by which she was permitted to warm her chilled limbs, and in this apartment she was also served with refreshments. She was, however, sick at heart, and could taste but little of the proffered food; perceiving this, Euphrasia kindled a lamp and offered to guide the maiden to her sleeping room,

a proposal to which Gertrude gladly acceded. Thereupon, Euphrasia conducted her up a spacious and gloomy looking staircase of dark wood, and through a long and narrow passage of a similar description, an open door was at the end of this passage, through which proceeded the pleasant glow of fire. On reaching this room, Euphrasia paused at the threshold, and extending the lamp, with her head averted, she prayed the damsel to take it, in a tone so full of trepidation, that Gertrude shrunk back, fearing to enter the apartment. Upon this, Euphrasia stooped down, and pushing the lamp over the floor, she thrust the girl into the room after it, and shutting the door upon her, locked and bolted it with a kind of frantic haste, and then fled as in the utmost terror down the passage.

At a loss to comprehend her conduct, Gertrude now took up the lamp to examine her chamber, it was spacious, and furnished with some degree of comfort. It had a wainscoting of oak, carved oaken chairs and tables, and dark stuff curtains surrounding the bed. Over the fire place hung a full length portrait, which

she took her lamp to examine, but what was her surprise, when she discovered in the array of a man-at-arms of the reign of the Eighth Henry, a perfect resemblance of her own father. Here was a mystery which she was at a loss to develope, had this house ever been the habitation of her father, and was she now on a demesne of Leonard Dacre? She had even while a child been often told by John Harding, that for centuries his own race had lived and died on the lands of the Dacres, and that a terrible misfortune had many years before driven him to London, where he had met and married her mother. Still prosecuting her search of the chamber, Gertrude discovered a closet, the door of which was unfastened: on opening it, she perceived a huge oaken chest. This chest was not locked, but the lid was heavy, and it was not without some difficulty that she raised it; but what was her horror when she beheld a mouldering skeleton within, a rattling noise ensued, occasioned by the slight motion of the chest, and as the pale rays of the lamp gleamed

upon the ghastly object, she saw a dagger falling among the dry bones. Hastily letting fall the lid of the chest, she fled from the closet, and sinking into a chair by the fire, vainly wished that her curiosity had not made her acquainted with the grisly companion of her chamber. Now too, she thought of the trepidation in which Euphrasia had approached that chamber: a murder had been perhaps committed there in bygone years, and the miserable victim had been left to moulder in that old oak chest: and this Euphrasia knew, and would not enter the room. Gertrude's heart grew sick, a dying groan seemed sounding in her ears; she trembled to look round, dreading almost to see the ghost of the murdered person at her side. Amid these horrors of superstition, the thought of other dangers assailed her, she remembered the conversation between Ralph and Hugh in the ruin, and she could not doubt that she was in the power of Lord Leicester.

While she thus sat lost in a sad reverie, the embers of the wood fire were sinking low, and

an intense feeling of cold, compelled her to wrap herself in her cloak, and lie down upon the bed; that bed which had perhaps once supported the form of the murdered person, the sight of whose poor remains had so revolted her. Gertrude spent the best part of that miserable night, in fervent prayers for the unhappy soul which had been sent so timelessly to its account, and in not less ardent supplications, for the divine protection to herself. Towards morning, overcome with watching and fatigue, she insensibly sunk into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

Hark ! the ravenne flappes hys wyng,
In the briered dell below :
Hark ! the dethe owle loude doth syng
To the nyght mares as they go.

CHATTERTON.

It was on the seventh day of Gertrude's imprisonment, that Euphrasia sat in one of the lower apartments of the house, holding deep converse with a tall and stately looking cavalier. Refreshments were on the table that stood between them, and the gentleman wore a riding cloak, as if only just arrived at the house, or now about to depart.

The hands of Euphrasia rested on the table, and tears were stealing down her face.

"This is a mere weakness!" said her companion. "I pray you, why should a few days residence in this old house have touched your spirit with so deep a melancholy. Besides, was it not your own proposal to come hither? I thought your heart was made of sterner stuff!"

"Ah!" replied Euphrasia bitterly, "I will not chide, because you thought that there could not be even a moment's compunction in my wickedness. I remember indeed that it was mine own proposal to come hither; I was myself deceived in mine own heart; I thought not it could so much tremble to the touch of compassion or remorse; that heart, whose hideous delight it hath been for years, to exult over the ruin of all that was lovely and estimable in woman!"

"Dreams, idle dreams, Euphrasia!" replied the cavalier, "bred from the shadows in this dismal house: it irks me that for a few days more you must, with the damsel, remain its inmate; but the fiery Dacre is abroad, and

bodies of his armed vassals traverse the country—it were unsafe to send you to Carlisle at present: more secure is your retreat in this lonely and long deserted dwelling; but be of good heart, soon we will again to London. You have served me right faithfully in this matter of the damsel, nor shall you find me ungrateful as of yore!”

“I pray you set that damsel free!” said Euphrasia.

“Set her free!” cried the cavalier, with an accent of astonishment, “good Euphrasia, thou art surely distraught. Bethink thyself, Euphrasia, with how much exultation of revenge didst thou contemplate the captivity of that maid, and dost thou now ask me to set her free? Bethink, whose child is this damsel whom thou wouldst save?”

“I have bethought me!” replied Euphrasia. “Oh not for years, long years, has this heart known such a throb of delight, thrilling even to its core, as when you told me whose child

was to be betrayed. The tongue that taunted my repentance, that urged me back into the gulf of guilt, seemed then to pour again into my ears its merciless reproach; the eye in which I had in vain sought the ray of compassion gazed sternly on my sufferings again! Then when you told me who was to be your victim, and these things rushed upon my mind, I bore the anguish which their memory wrought, with the promise of a near revenge!"

"And do you now turn from this revenge, even when the cup of its promise is tendered brimming to your lips?" enquired the cavalier.

"Aye!" returned Euphrasia, "for I have grown sick at the draught: dim and sad forebodings, the shadows of a coming doom oppress my mind. I dare not look upon the girl; but once have I approached her chamber, and the holy and quiet pride of her eyes, then filled me with a loathing of myself. The better

part does she seem to have, of the severe and cruel being, who mocked me in my early fall: all the dignity of virtue, without its sharp acidity, is hers!"

"Truly! remarked the cavalier, "thou art becoming a doctor, Euphrasia! who would not marvel when virtue makes the theme of thy discussion! But may I not fear to trust thy guardage of the maiden, since thy conscience hath become so nice!"

"I never broke my word with thee!" replied Euphrasia, and there was a deep and uncomplaining melancholy in her tone.

"No never!" answered her companion. "But Euphrasia, didst thou not play false with Sir Philip, assuredly on the night when I bore thee from Eltham, thou didst liberate Lucy Fenton!"

"Even so!" replied Euphrasia. "I have no horrible ties, to urge me on to vice, or virtue at Sir Philip's will. 'Tis a poor, weak youth, that might hold himself my debtor even

that I released the maiden, his vice is vanity, and conscience pricks him when his vanity is full; he would have destroyed the girl for very vanity, and wept afterwards that he had destroyed her. Truly I served the silly youth in depriving him of his prey; and some gratitude I owe him, he bore with the infirmities of my poor o'erburdened brain, when you would not bear them !'

"He renders you but slender thanks for the service!" replied the cavalier, "but the day wears on, and I must away; since the Earls have fled, I had fain hoped to bear the damsel hence, but while this rash Dacre blows anew the spark of discord, such attempt were unwise. And now must I back with all speed, to watch in secret the movements of our blunt Hunsdon, whose tough unmanageable honesty, may find too much that will jump with its own humour, in the romance of that would be knight-errant, my Lord Morden, who may take my word, that his share in the escape of the

fair Gertrude, had not passed unrewarded, but that it happened to chime somewhat with mine own inclinations !”

“ Go you then so soon ?” said Euphrasia.

“ Aye !” returned the gentleman, filling with wine, two silver goblets that stood upon the table.

Euphrasia absorbed in her sad thoughts, had not perceived that during their conversation, he had dexterously let fall into one of these goblets, a small quantity of powder.

She waved her hand in token of refusal as he now pushed the goblet towards her.

“ Ungracious churl !” said the cavalier, “ will you not pledge me the stirrup cup ?”

Thus urged, Euphrasia smiled mournfully, and accepting the goblet, she swallowed its contents.

A fearful, almost convulsive smile played for a moment about the lips of the cavalier, as she put the empty vessel upon the table. He seemed in sudden haste to begone ; and hurriedly bidding her farewell, he turned to leave

the apartment; at the door however, he hesitated, and then said, " You will spare the fellow Ralph for a few hours; surely Euphrasia, you can for one evening attend upon the damsel?"

" It is a task which likes me not!" she answered petulantly, " I care not to approach either that girl, or the chamber of her dwelling; but be it even as you will, can I chuse, are not the evils of my fate beyond mine own control, that which you will, have I not always done?"

" Nay, Euphrasia! who knows amid the chances of this life, if I may ever ask a service of you more?"

The woman in her abstraction noticed not the indefinable expression which again crossed his countenance; but listlessly repeating, " As you will, as you will!" she rose to follow him to the door, but he declined this proffered attention.

" The day is chill!" he observed, rest you here, Euphrasia, for you have need!"

With these words he quitted the room; a

few minutes afterwards the sound of horses' hoofs was heard without, and Euphrasia looking up, beheld her late companion pass the window followed by Ralph Adams. Her eyes again grew dim with tears, as she watched through that narrow casement, the figure of the cavalier as it appeared, and disappeared among the windings of the glen. Tears were common to Euphrasia, for long, long years, scarce a day had passed on which she had not shed them. But not such tears as those which she now wept, tears of terror, of disappointed passion, of fierce remorse, had been hers; but there was something soothing in those which she now wept; they seemed to give back to the guilty and miserable woman, a portion of the innocence of her youth, and her heart softened to the holiness of hope, to the veriest lowliness of repentance. It seemed even as if those words of loathing and contempt, which had in her youth stung her heart to such a bitterness of hatred towards the being who had uttered them; it seemed as

if such words would calm her wounded spirit now. Once even as Euphrasia wept, a thought of prayer crossed her mind; she had not prayed for twenty years before.

Meanwhile, alone and in captivity, Gertrude Harding was borne up by the sweet self reliance of a righteous spirit, she could not believe that heaven would abandon to be the victim of vice, one who had ever endeavoured to tread in the path of charity, and kindness. Since the morning after her arrival at this lonely dwelling, she had not seen Euphrasia. On her entering the room on that morning, the girl, urged by a natural curiosity, had enquired who was the original of the portrait which hung over the mantle piece. A dark colour rose even into the woman's brow at this enquiry, and seizing Gertrude violently by the wrists, she gazed eagerly from her features to the picture, as though she endeavoured to trace a resemblance between them. Then bursting into a wild laugh, she released her hold, and exclaimed.

"No, no, thou art not like ; there is too much softness, too much mercy in thy face ; thou wouldst not trample on the wretched, girl ? I do think thou wouldst not !"

And thus Euphrasia had quitted the room, and throughout the seven weary days of her imprisonment, Gertrude had not again beheld her. Her meals were regularly served by the fanatic Ralph, from whose tongue, she suffered all that malice could invent ; and more than once was she taunted with her futile escape in the ruin.

"But the Lord, maiden, the Lord ! hath now delivered thee into my hands, then submit to thy fate with a godliness of patience, for it is vain to wrestle with the judgments of the Lord !"

Thus spoke Ralph Adams to Gertrude, on the morning of that day on which Euphrasia held the conversation which we have detailed. To this kind of language custom had now made Gertrude almost indifferent, and she could have

borne that, and even her imprisonment with fortitude, had she not looked to some future and greater evil than even such a loss of her liberty, for she could not believe that the person by whose orders she had been imprisoned, whether it were Lord Leicester, or any other individual, intended long to suffer her to remain unmolested. Many other anxious thoughts had Gertrude too, her beloved father, her cousin, what was their fate? And Lord Dacre—success she feared, from the nature of that summons, which had arrived at Raby just before she was torn from her friend Blanche, had not attended the enterprise on which she knew so well the gallant spirit of Leonard Dacre, had risked its dearest hopes. A bitter sigh burst from the heart of Gertrude at these thoughts.

That cause had ever been the loadstone of her own heart, but perhaps she felt in the present instance, less for her own disappointment, than for that of Leonard Dacre. And what would become of her now, for what horrible

fate was she reserved, should she never see Lord Dacre more? That was a question which recurred with an incessant and painful repetition to Gertrude's mind.

The strange demeanor too, of Euphrasia, furnished her with much matter for meditation, and, as her eyes rested on the picture which so strangely resembled her own father, and she recollected the words of Euphrasia, while she compared her face with that represented in the portrait, she became convinced that John Harding had at some period of his life, crossed the path of that extraordinary female. There was nothing in the nature of Euphrasia's expressions to repudiate this idea, for though he had ever been tenderness itself to her, Gertrude knew that in the cause of virtue, her father could be severe.

The miserable remains too, that were concealed in the closet, often did she shudder as remembered them; the dagger hid there with the skeleton, spoke manifestly of murder.

Such a train of horrible associations did the near vicinity of such an object awaken, that all the innocence of Gertrude's heart, combined with her unusual power of mind, was required to enable her to support her situation, or perhaps even, when the dim twilight closed in, or through the silent watches of the night, to preserve her reason.

After Ralph had withdrawn on this the day that she had completed a week's imprisonment, Gertrude seated herself at the little casement of her apartment, her single and melancholy amusement, to mark the mists creeping along the lonely glen, or watch the eddyng clouds, as they scudded over the surface of the wintry sky.

Seated at the casement, she drew forth the ruby ring of Lord Dacre, for since her flight from London she had worn it not on her finger but as an amulet, next her heart. Long and earnestly did she regard this ring, her only and most precious treasure, and when she returned

it to its wonted hiding place, it was wetted with her tears.

She now turned her eyes towards the glen, a soft, summer kind of sunlight on this day, threw a yellow tint over its turfy knolls, and danced upon the dark boughs of some fir trees which grew luxuriantly near the house, while it threw into bold relief all the fantastic masses of rock which overhung the river, whose course down the glen Gertrude could distinguish from her casement. Now the glow of the sunbeams touched the sharp, bare rocks with a red, or saffron coloring, or darting among the woods which fringed their ledges, contrasted with the black and leafless branches of the trees, the deep shining verdure of the arbutus, and its delicate branches of pink flowers.

So fine was the day, that it tempted Gertrude to open her little casement; though it was now the beginning of January the softness of spring was in the gentle breeze that came whispering down the glen; and on the sky, the clouds had assumed the azure tint which

they wear in that loveliest of seasons, occasionally flecked with a feathery looking streak of white.

While Gertrude thus lingered at the casement, she perceived a tall man issue from a side door of the house; her heart grew sick, for his large mantle, and the feathers drooping in his hat, could not conceal from her the Earl of Leicester.

A suffocating sensation seized her, and she sunk back in her chair, overcome with horror, at this realization of her worst fears. When had he arrived? thought Gertrude, probably on that day, but there had been such a constant coming, and going of the armed men, who had first accompanied her to the house, that the sound of a horse's hoof in the glen, had ceased to excite in her any extraordinary surprise. On the preceding evening indeed, she had seen a party of six soldiers take their way up the glen, and had thought, that Ralph and herself, with Euphrasia, were the only persons left in the house; the noisy hilarity of the other men,

having frequently ascended to her lonely chamber, while on that evening all had been quiet.

The long ivy wreathes which partly overhung her casement, enabled Gertrude now to watch the Earl without being observed; and as she looked through them, she perceived that he was joined by Ralph Adams. They conversed in a low tone, but snatches of their speech ascended to the casement; the first words which she caught were those of the Earl.

“Nay, I dare not at present move her to Carlisle, that meddling Morden is with Lord Hunsdon, I believe indeed his journey to the north has had little other purpose than mine own, the discovery of this fair damsel, though he affects to join the army!”

Something was then said by Ralph, which escaped the ear of Gertrude, and she heard only the latter portion of Lord Leicester’s reply, for the casement was a high one, so high indeed as to preclude all hope of an escape from it.

"You will return by midnight!" concluded Lord Leicester. "It irks me that we are driven on such a necessity, but she will be secure until then: hasten, for we can lose no time!"

Gertrude's heart beat somewhat more freely, for she began to hope that, now at least, the earl would not molest her with his presence: in reply to some remark made by Ralph, he observed—

"Nay, she knows it not, it was a bold and secret undertaking of mine own; my faithful Ralph, I will be here with the first light of the morning, and then to London again in all speed!"

At this point of their conversation, the earl and his companion moved from beneath the window, and to the inexpressible relief of Gertrude, she beheld them both mounted a few minutes afterwards, and taking their way down the glen. Eagerly she watched them till they were out of sight, and then every dread for the future, absorbed in a feeling of thank-

fulness, she sunk upon her knees, to praise heaven for her present escape. Meantime the sunbeams began to stretch in longer lines athwart the glen, then they gradually grew paler, till the sober grey tints of evening settled down upon the landscape, and threw a darker horror on the brown rocks and overhanging woods.

Gertrude had closed the casement, and had sat for some time watching the flame leap and play about a billet of wood which she had just thrown upon her fire; when suddenly she was startled by a loud, and heart rending shriek, which seemed as though it were uttered in one of the lower apartments. A sound so horrible, so expressive of an extremity of agony, she had never before heard, and she started from her seat, and stood panting, in expectation that it would be repeated. It sunk however, in a long, low wail, which was succeeded by several heavy groans, and these gradually died into silence.

Gertrude glanced fearfully about her chamber; the evening had set in, and in spite of the unusual fineness of the day—it was suddenly and unusually dark, the sky having that kind of blackness by which at another season of the year, she would have foretold a coming thunder storm. That dismal shriek had been uttered by a female voice, and though she could not recognise the tones, Gertrude did not doubt that the sufferer was Euphrasia. Believing that the men in his employ, or even Lord Leicester himself, was capable of almost any atrocity, Gertrude would have resolved that the unhappy female was suffering some extremity of ill usage at their hands; but a total silence reigned in the house; she could not hear either voice or step, and had indeed reason to believe now that the earl and Ralph had departed, that Euphrasia, and herself, were the only inhabitants of the house. Ill as had been the conduct of this woman towards herself, Gertrude would not have hesitated a moment to tender her any assistance

which might alleviate such suffering as was betokened by that horrible shriek; but she was a prisoner in her chamber, the door being locked and bolted on the outside. Hence she was compelled to remain there, listening in nervous agitation for the repetition of that frightful sound.

Now too, as ever in the still evening hour, the thought of her dread companion in the closet, stole over her mind, and shook even her firm nerves. She rose hastily, and kindled a lamp, which was always left upon her table; and then resumed her seat by the fire, every other thought absorbed for the time in the recollection of that agonising shriek. It might have been half an hour from the time when the scream had rung through the house, that she was again startled by the sound of a heavy, leaden kind of foot, apparently in the act of ascending the stairs. There was something strange and horrible in that lingering foot-fall, still recurring after a pause of from two

to three minutes; at length the stairs seemed passed, and Gertrude heard that heavy, painful step advance along the passage which led to her chamber: no groan or shriek of anguish was heard, nothing but the dull foot which she shuddered as she listened to. She was now wrought into a state of high excitement, and as the step approached her chamber, she flew to the door, exclaiming—

“ For heaven’s sake, whoever you are, if it be in my power to assist you, hasten to withdraw the fastenings of this dreadful door !”

Hereupon a dismal sound, something between a sob and a groan, passed through the gallery, and there seemed an endeavor of the staggering feet to approach more quickly; they reached her door, and its bolt was forced back in the staple, then there was a heavy sound as of some person falling across the threshold.

“ Oh, heaven !” exclaimed Gertrude, “ what is to be done ?” for she now felt certain, that some unhappy and suffering being, was in want

of such assistance as might be in her power to afford. "Poor unfortunate!" she continued, "is it not possible for you to unlock the door?"

A renewed groan was her only reply, and the humane Gertrude, snatching a knife from the table, vainly endeavored to force back the lock. This effort on her part, however, seemed to revive the courage of the sufferer without, an apparently uncertain and trembling hand passed over the door, till it rested on the key, which was with some difficulty turned in the lock. The door opened inwardly with a latch, which Gertrude speedily raised, but on her opening the door, an object presented itself, from which at the moment she recoiled in horror. Euphrasia, looking more like an animated corpse, than a human being, sat crouched upon the threshold. Her long, black hair had escaped from its covering, and hung in loose masses over her shoulders; a frightful pallor was on her features, save that about her mouth and fixed eyes, there was the purple look of convulsion. Her clenched hands, which Ger-

trude grasped, were icy cold, and such a coldness too was on her brow, on which were fast gathering the dews of death. Gertrude found that she was incapable either to walk or rise, and with much difficulty she dragged her into the room: a universal shiver now seized Euphrasia's frame, and her teeth chattered as in an ague fit; to lift her on the bed, was an effort beyond the slight measure of Gertrude's strength, but she stretched her within the genial glow which spread round the fire place, and supported her head upon pillows and cushions. She now chafed her hands and temples, and warming a portion of some wine which had been left in her chamber, she succeeded in forcing a small quantity down Euphrasia's throat. Partly revived by these attentions, the latter betrayed some symptoms of returning consciousness, her features became less convulsed, and Gertrude fancied, that she could discover a slight warmth diffusing itself over the chill hands, which she still held between her own. At length the eyes of Eu-

phrasia lost that glassy stare which Gertrude had been terrified to look upon, and she fixed them upon the damsel, with an expression which had in it both melancholy and recollection. The violence of her agony seemed past, but she was powerless as the new born babe. She put her hand towards a gold chain which hung about her neck, but that hand refused its office, and fell as if paralysed by her side. Gertrude perceiving this, unloosed her boddice, in the folds of which, the extremity of the chain was concealed; she then discovered that a miniature was attached to that chain, and as the light of the fire flashed over it, she recognized the features of Lord Leicester. A glance told Gertrude, that the portrait had been taken many years before; the pride of youth, no less than of beauty, was in that striking resemblance, and as the astonished girl intently regarded it, she fancied that the curl of the lip betrayed an audacity, a lack of that wiliness in sin, of which she believed the Earl, to be now a perfect master. There was an expression of sincere

compassion in the countenance of Gertrude as the miniature of Leicester fell from her hand, and she looked upon the face of the dying woman, whom she believed to be his victim.

“ You pity me !” said Euphrasia, and as she spoke, the maiden was obliged to bend low, in order to catch her weak and trembling accents.

“ Aye, poor unhappy one !” answered Gertrude, “ tell me only how I may relieve you !”

“ Alas, maiden, this miserable world is fast fleeing from my sight, and dim, and threatening does the future frown on me ! Oh, was it not cruel ! his hand administered the cup, his hand has hurried on my frightful doom ! There was poison, maiden, in the draught he gave !”

“ Who gave ?” gasped Gertrude.

“ That Leicester gave !” replied the miserable Euphrasia, rallying with the very strength of death : and grasping the hands of the maiden with a frightful energy, while rage, remorse, and terror, agitated her countenance.

“ Hark ! hark, damsel to my hideous tale, and then you will leave me to my fate, you

will shrink from me as from the poisonous asp!"

"Alas, unhappy woman!" said Gertrude, "what tale hast thou to tell, or where is the heart that would not pity thy condition?"

"Within thy father's breast!" replied Euphrasia in a hollow tone, "oh, all my worst of misery and guilt, do I not owe to that merciless heart, so stern, so insulting in its virtue!"

"Speak!" said Gertrude with a frenzy almost equalling that of the miserable sufferer before her, "speak, woman, what hadst thou to do with my dear father?"

Euphrasia had fallen back upon the cushions, exhausted by her late violence, her eyes closed, and her breath was so faintly heaved that Gertrude thought she was even then dying, dying with the secret of her connexion with John Harding, trembling undisclosed on her lip. Oh, with what an intensity of agony did Gertrude gaze upon her livid features, yet preserving all their chisselled beauty amid the dark shadows of the most horrible of deaths.

Once more her eyes unclosed. "Oh!" she faintly murmured, "in this dreadful hour must I be the herald of my sins, must I hear yet another voice, commend me to despair? Thou hast a valorous heart, Gertrude Harding, says he, whose cruelty is that of the coward; who drugs the cup, and deals with daggers in the dark! He told me so, but I will prove it now! Shrink not then from the sister of your father, though he cursed and spurned her twenty years ago. Oh, he might have saved, but he chose to urge me on my doom!"

"Thou! thou! wretched woman!" cried Gertrude, "the paramour of Leicester, the sister of John Harding!"

"Aye, even so!" replied Euphrasia, something of malice flashing through the film, which was fast gathering, over her once brilliant eyes. "Thine aunt, most virtuous, and dainty damsel; I see thy father's spirit in thee now! Spurn me then dying, as he did, when I was betrayed; or own that he had a cruel heart! I vowed even to leave the lover whom I adored,

—I asked him only for silence, that I might hide my shame; and he could refuse me that poor boon, he spurned me from his feet, and slew my father with the dreadful tale, and blazoned it! in the ears of my younger brother!”

“Woman! woman!” shrieked Gertrude, “die not with these black falsehoods on your lips. I will not believe you are my father’s sister!”

“Believe that portrait then—the portrait of his father!” said Euphrasia, pointing upwards to the picture, which had excited Gertrude’s attention, from its extraordinary resemblance to John Harding. Euphrasia continued—“But I sought some vengeance for his scorn, and Leicester came hither to repay my wrongs! Hark, maiden!” she said in a whispering tone, “he slew my younger brother as he slept—alas! alas! my sternest tyrant escaped the blow! He escaped, for whom it was designed!”

Gertrude now started back in horror, and

and Euphrasia clapping her hands together, burst into a frantic laugh.

“ Said I not it would be so !” she exclaimed, “ that you too would shrink from me in disgust ? But scorn me not, proud maiden, for thou mayst live to be Lord Leicester’s victim yet ; and oh that I might live to see thee so, I then were quitted of those wrongs thy barbarous father wrought !”

Gertrude had shrunk appalled from the side of her misguided aunt ; broken and disjoined as was her horrible tale, there was too much reason to believe its truth : and that skeleton in the closet was then—the remains of the murdered brother of Euphrasia. A renewed torpor had again fallen upon her, and as she lay stretched motionless, and apparently speechless, Gertrude heard the rising wind come wailing down the glen. Presently a sharp shower of hail stones rattled against the narrow casement : the sound seemed to rouse the dying Euphrasia—she lifted her head, and looked fearfully round the apartment, and as

the pale light of the lamp fell upon her countenance, Gertrude perceived legibly written there, the characters of fast approaching death. The maiden shuddered, a spirit was about to burst the bonds of mortality, a soul to be summoned to the judgment seat—what dreadful and mysterious agents might then throng that narrow chamber, though unseen: awfully sensible that she was not alone, Gertrude sunk in the very agony of prayer upon her knees.

“Hark!” said Euphrasia, and at that moment, loud even above the fury of the storm, Gertrude heard, what seemed to be a heavy blow, upon the framework of the casement, “do you hear that?” shrieked the dying woman, “that summons is for me—oh for a week, a day, an hour of life!” Then her brain wandered. “Why do you bring me here? was it not in this room, at the midnight hour,—oh no, I cannot lie upon that bed, behold, there is a blood stain on the sheets!”

The horror stricken Gertrude now drew from

her bosom a crucifix, which had been given to her by Blanche Norton; she held it before the failing eyes of the dying woman, she grasped her clammy hand, and strove to speak of mercy and of hope.

"Why talk of mercy!" said Euphrasia, "there is no time for it, the last brief summons will be here anon. But why does he stand there and frown at me, they told me he was buried in the glen? See! there is no blood upon my hand!"

As Euphrasia spoke thus, she pointed towards Gertrude, who trembling turned her head, half expecting to see the phantom of the wretched woman's conscience by her side. At that moment, mingled with the wild winds, and the stil beating hail storm, theseeming blow was repeated, the casement shaking with its violence. Euphrasia started, and with a shriek, prolonged and terrible as that which she had uttered when writhing under the first pangs of the poison, sunk back upon the cushions: when Gertrude again looked at her, she was dead

Long and fervently did Gertrude pray for that unhappy spirit which had been so briefly summoned to a dread account, and while so absorbed in prayer, she thought not of herself, or of the peculiar horrors of her own position, the lonely watcher of the murdered dead, the victim now fairly snared in a toil, which the villany of Leicester might have taken years to spread. How had the broken confession of the guilty Euphrasia, at once revealed all the mystery of sorrow which Gertrude had ever found spread, like a veil, over the early life of her father. Had he indeed been so stern towards a sister? but what must have been her guilt to make him so, and she, that being most miserable, so dark a catalogue of crime had been revealed in her last terrible moments, that if the charity of Gertrude's heart might plead for her, its sense of justice did not dare to hope. The paramour of Leicester, a remote cause of the murder of her own brother, the betrayer in others of that innocence which she had herself so long abandoned. Timidly

did Gertrude turn her eyes to the body of Euphrasia, the embers were sinking white and cold upon the hearth, but near the foot of the corpse stood the small table, with the lamp, and the sickly rays streamed full upon its features. A hideous blackness was already spreading over them, and as Gertrude observed it, she remembered Euphrasia's assertion that she had been poisoned by the Earl. Leicester had been so frequently charged with that detestable crime that Gertrude scrupled but little to believe that he had now committed it. And this after twenty years of guilt and misery, this was the reward of that unhappy wretch who had sacrificed both heaven and earth for him; what unaccountable infatuation too had possessed her, she knew his infamy, had pampered even his falsehood towards herself, yet his picture was placed near her heart, was sought for by her hand, even amid the torments of that death, which his hand had bestowed.

There was something too frightful in those

discoloured features, and Gertrude summoning all her courage, took a sheet from the bed, and wound in it the body of Euphrasia; often, while engaged in that terrible duty did she start, and tremble, and look fearfully towards that window, at which had been heard those terrific and mysterious blows, during the parting agony of her unhappy aunt: but there were no sounds now, save that of the beating rain, and of the wild winds that sung the dirge of the departed.

Gertrude had finished her awful task, and with her crucifix clasped to her bosom, she yet breathed prayers for the dead; the storm still raged fearfully without, a frightful contrast to the spring-like beauty of the past day; and now as she glanced towards the unbarred door of her chamber, a bitter thought presented itself, that but for that storm, the way had now been open for her to escape, but it were certain death, to venture at that dark and terrible hour out into the open glen. Ever and anon, amid

the pauses of the gust, the roaring of the river met her ears, and a false step in the glen, with which she was so little acquainted, might precipitate her in the foaming waters. She longed for the morning light, for with that she resolved to attempt an escape; she was not indeed forgetful that with that morning light Lord Leicester had promised to return, and that at the hour of midnight she might expect Ralph, but in foiling their intentions, she trusted that the sudden and terrible storm might yet prove her friend. The fears of the death chamber were however now becoming too great to be endured; she could not look upon the shrouded person of Euphrasia, but all the horrors of the face which that shroud concealed, were present to her mental eye, if she glanced towards the closet, her thoughts were with the grisly tenant of the trunk, and if she looked towards the more remote parts of the chamber, her busy fancy sketched amid its shadows a thousand dreadful forms. So great was the

horror of Gertrude, that she dared not move even to take the lamp and leave that apartment but cowered on her knees by the side of the bed, oppressed with a nameless apprehension. While she thus knelt, she heard, between the pauses of the gust, the sound of a horse's hoofs, rapidly coming down the glen; that sound restored her sinking energies, the monster Ralph was no doubt returning, and springing to her feet, she summoned all her courage to her aid. She took the lamp to leave that horrible chamber, resolving to seek concealment in some other part of the house. But the rider had been probably nearer than she had imagined, for ere she reached the end of the gallery, she heard a foot ascending the stairs, and another light than that which she carried flashed upon the walls; she now hesitated whether to advance or recede, and while she hesitated Ralph Adams appeared.

"Well, sweet damsel! fair Mistress Gertrude!" he began, "how comes it thou art out

of thy cage, and where, I pray thee, is that proud dame Euphrasia? she was like, my lord told me, to be sick to-night, but is she ill so soon?"

"Man?" said Gertrude, "she is dead: let her fate be a warning even to thyself."

"Aye! aye!" said Ralph, whose staggering step, and swimming eye showed him to be under the influence of strong drink, "is it even so, well, mourn not, Mistress Gertrude, for of a verity, when the Lord decrees, we must all die, therefore doth it behove us to take in due time the pleasures of this goodly world, lest it seem that we slight the bounty which has spread them before us. Be of good heart, Mistress Gertrude, for with the morning's light, the right noble Earl of Leicester will be here, and he holds thee highly, maiden, in his love, wherefore, I pray thee, reject not the illumination which is offered thee, but turn thy back upon the darkness of Papistry, and the abominations of Rome!"

"Leave me, wretch!" said Gertrude, as she returned to her chamber, and set the lamp upon the table, "leave me, for the presence of the dead is less horrible than thine!"

"Nay, nay, I will not leave thee!" said Ralph, "I had not left thee so long, but that it behoved that I should once more see, and dupe, the fool Sir Philip; but now, since the Earl may not be here till the light of the morning, even solace thee in my company till he comes! and I will count up the rewards which thou shalt have for the loss of mine hand, which I owe to the strong-armed stranger who defended thee. Ha! ha! he is a traitor too, our Queen will have his heart's blood, maiden, yet!"

While speaking, Ralph also set down his lamp, and seizing the damsel with his single hand, he dragged her, in spite of her entreaties and shrieks, along the gallery. A strange step, however, was on the stairs, and a loud voice bade the ruffian forbear: startled by that voice, Ralph partially relaxed his hold,

and Gertrude, extricating herself, fled back to the chamber, whither she was followed by Ralph, now swearing horribly that she should not escape him. There was a rushing of feet along the gallery, a loud cry from the Puritan, the report of a pistol, and a heavy fall. Then as the smoke from the discharge of the weapon disappeared, the figure of a cavalier advanced into the chamber: he stepped across the body of Ralph, who lay shot through the brain upon the threshold, and eagerly looked round the room. In the back ground was the dusky-looking bed, and near the hearth, on which the last faint embers of the fire were now decaying, stood Gertrude Harding, her hands clasped, her features pale and rigid, and at her feet the shrouded body of the dead Euphrasia.

The light of the lamps which yet burned upon the table, discovered to Gertrude the features of the cavalier, and she sprung forwards with a shriek of joy. Was that a moment in which a generous spirit could

hearken to the cold dictates of a worldly pride, conventional prejudice on the one side, and timid, maidenly reserve on the other, were alike borne down by the torrent of a natural emotion, and Gertrude was clasped to the heart of Leonard Dacre, and drank in his murmured tones, the assurance of a love, as ardent, as undying as her own.

Lord Dacre was for the time forgetful of his high blood, an advantage in those days so greatly valued, that even his mind had not fully learned to rate it only at its worth. This sense of a conventional impropriety in that passionate love which he felt for the merchant's daughter, had indeed hitherto deluded him into a belief, that he did not love her; that gratitude, and esteem, and friendship, gave her the strong interest which he could not deny that she possessed in his heart. But again it had been his fate to save her, and in circumstances even more appalling than those under which he had rescued her before; the surprise, the confusion, the delight of that

moment was too strong for the deceptions of the cunning heart, and Lord Dacre owned his passion, alike to its object, and to himself.

Leaning on his arm, Gertrude now descended to the lower apartments of the house: a convulsive shudder passed through her frame, as she looked upon the body of the fanatic Ralph, as it lay with a dark pool of blood curdling round it. Now she found that Lord Dacre, travelling at a late hour to the dwelling of one of his friends, an advocate of Mary's cause, had been overtaken by the storm; that unknowing where to seek shelter, he had remembered the old house in the glen, which had once belonged to her father, but which domestic misfortune had induced him many years before to desert; and there he had arrived immediately after the arrival of Ralph. The shriek of Gertrude had excited his attention, and the threatened violence of Ralph, had provoked the discharge of that pistol, which had terminated together his life and his crimes. Gertrude, it may be believed, was not slow to

inform Lord Dacre of the promised return of the Earl of Leicester, and now too he first learned to what evils she had been subjected, by the profligate suit of that most abandoned among men.

Leonard Dacre had a generous heart, it would not give itself by halves, and as he hung over the merchant's daughter, and won from her again and again, the assurance of her love, so often did he execrate the villany of Leicester, and swear that she should never be exposed to it more.

Oh, blessed witchery of love, sweet illusion, chequering with a brief sunshine the dark waste of human existence! Illusion ever dear to generous souls; who so dull that they would not exchange for the fascination of thy fleeting joys, that cold, and stern reality which does not even know a joy by name? Oh, sweet even is the memory of thine ideal delights; that memory which cheers the broken spirit, from which the once fond belief in thy reality has already departed; for

we will think that a joy so entrancing is not confined to this imperfect, and finite being, that the time, and the existence shall be, when love will not fleet from us, like the beauty of the summer rose, like the painted butterfly that nestles in its breast !

It was not long after the arrival of Lord Dacre at the house in the glen, that the storm fell ; Gertrude was nervously anxious to quit that dreadful house, she feared the arrival of the Earl, for it was unlikely that he would come unattended, and from the thought of danger to Lord Dacre, she shrunk in an agony of terror beyond any which she had ever experienced for herself. While the storm raged, Leonard had endeavoured only to soothe her under those terrors, but foolhardiness is not courage, and he was not blind to the probability that there might be fearful odds against his single arm, should he be unfortunately compelled to linger in the glen with Gertrude, until the hour when Leicester might arrive. So

soon therefore as the violence of the rain had abated, he walked to the door of the house, hoping to estimate by the appearance of the skies, the probable chances that he might speedily secure a departure. Immediately that Lord Dacre opened the door, he was sensible of a sudden change in the atmosphere; the wind still swept down the glen, but so keen was it, that by the light of the lamp which Gertrude held within the doorway, he perceived that it had already changed, to glittering icicles, the drops of water that had trickled from its eave. The stars too, had broken out, and shone with the intense brilliancy of a severe frost; and the sullen roaring of the river was subdued. Most earnest now were Gertrude's entreaties for an immediate departure, and as Lord Dacre was acquainted with every foot almost of the glen, he did not long delay in yielding to those entreaties. Such offices of christian charity, as are due to the dead, Gertrude had already rendered to the unhappy Euphrasia.

And Leonard now brought to the door of

the house, his own horse, together with that which Ralph had ridden, and which Gertrude did not hesitate to appropriate to her own use. These animals had been sheltered from the storm in one of the ruined outbuildings.

Sweet too, in their smothered utterance, were the words with which Lord Dacre led the damsel from that fatal house. And the vows which had been pledged at the midnight hour, and witnessed by the dead; deeply were those vows recorded in their hearts, who gave and spoke. When they were both mounted, and Lord Dacre took the bridle of her horse to guide it up the glen, how natural was it that as the hand of Gertrude must also be kept upon the rein, it should often tremble in the clasp of her noble lover. Her lover: she, the lowly daughter of John Harding, the promised bride of Leonard Dacre, the guiding star of her thoughts, the hero of her early dreams; Gertrude's heart did not seem large enough to contain the huge amount of its present happiness; and as she hung upon the

low breathing voice of Leonard, she seemed better to believe its passionate vows, the more frequently that they were repeated. There is something sad though, even in an excess of happiness, and as Gertrude looked up to the starry sky, the tears stole into her eyes; the magnitude even of her bliss made her tremble for its duration, and the bright skies reminded her of brighter worlds; was not such happiness as hers, better fitted to those worlds than this? There was a holiness of sorrow in the thought, and in timid accents did Gertrude impart it to her lover.

“And thou!” replied Leonard Dacre, “who canst shame man in his boasted courage and endurance, and surpasses woman in all the tender virtues of her sex, my gentle, my exalted love; mayst not thou hope for heavenly happiness on earth—that earth which thou dost grace with the fair attributes of heaven! Dim not then with tears, even of tenderness, the young May morning of our joy!”

“Be not thou!” answered Gertrude;

"among the list of those vain ones, who would corrupt my foolish heart: for in sooth that which thou swearest, I cannot choose, but believe!"

"Believe then!" replied Leonard Dacre, "that the heart, dearest, can bear with happiness, no less than with sorrow!"

By the time that they had reached the mouth of the glen, a faint streak in the east betokened the approach of morning. Lord Dacre had declared to Gertrude his design of conveying her to his castle of Rockcliffe, which was but five miles distant from Carlisle: in this castle he said she might again enjoy the companionship of the gentle Blanche Norton, who, with her husband and his brothers, were residing there. Anxiously too, now that the tumult of her feelings had somewhat subsided, did Gertrude enquire the fate of the two earls.

"Alas!" answered Leonard, "in spite of my entreaties, they resolved without another struggle, to yield to the power of Elizabeth; and the day after that on which you were

torn from the company of Mistress Blanche, did they flee with their wives, and father Cuthbert into Scotland! There are many true spirits, and but few traitors, among the brave clans of the Scottish border, and heaven grant our noble friends meet only with the first!"

"Heaven indeed grant it!" replied Gertrude, "but I pray you, dear and noble lord, if any portion of success crown your single and gallant endeavour, will they still lurk as exiles to the land of their birth?"

"I do hope, mine own love!" answered Leonard Dacre, "to show them yet, how much may be done by a determined few, power is as much won by a moral, as by a physical force: could we defeat only a portion of Elizabeth's armies, the courage of the Catholics would grow with a decrease of its necessity; for alas, alas, too prone are they to regard rather the danger which may result from a noble resistance to the principles of injustice, than the low, debasing tyrannies, which will

more efficiently crush them, the longer they are endured !”

Now too Gertrude found that on the day before only, Lord Dacre had received by the hand of a faithful friend to the cause of Queen Mary, another hastily written epistle from Vitelli, announcing the immediate departure of that Italian from London, a measure into which he said, that he was hurried, by the insolence of the Queen and her ministers. Considerable doubts too did Vitelli express of the fidelity of his own secretary, Mancini, and something did he mention of a silver crucifix. At the name of the crucifix, Gertrude spoke of that which she had seen in the house of the Ambassador; and Lord Dacre concluded with herself that the scroll which it contained having fallen into the hands of the ministers, had, fatally for him who was concerned in it, developed the plot for Mary's deliverance; and that this unhappy person was the same whom Lord Dacre had beheld emerge from the ditch, and who had

rescued Gertrude in the vault, they were also satisfied. Neither did they doubt that Leicester was connected with this discovery, for he indeed had been the assailant of Gertrude, in the gallery of Vitelli's house. The futile attempt of Lord Dacre himself, to liberate the unhappy Queen of Scots, he had already detailed to Gertrude.

They had for some time quitted the glen, and were traversing that broken rocky road, through which Gertrude had been during the preceding week, conducted by Enphrasia. The morning was now beginning fairly to break; one by one the bright stars paled and disappeared, the sharp wind, however, still continued to blow, and as the day slowly spread over the horizon, the wild landscape which surrounded the travellers; wooded knoll, and splintered pinnacle, dark hollow, and wildly spreading wood, appeared invested in one lovely robe of white. The last shower of hail, still lay in frozen heaps upon the shelving bosom of the rocks: and the green moss, and many colored

lichens, the fragile delicate birch, the richly verdant holly, and arbutus, the knotted branches of the venerable oak, and the evergreen fir, were alike hung with a glittering garment of hoar frost. Nothing could be more beautiful than this frost, beheld through the long vista of rocks on which the trees and shrubs sparkled with more than a silvery lustre; a light transparent mist too, floating among the hollows and between the boles of the trees, encreased, by partly veiling the charm of the scene; while cold and dull, though striking in its contrast, spread the wintry sky, with one lingering star shining sweetly amid its grey depths. Lord Dacre and his fair companion had nearly reached that point of the road which diverged from amid the rocks and cataracts, to that more level and wooded ground, where Gertrude had thought, that she had discerned the towers of a monastery or castle. It was then that her quick and anxious ear, caught the distant sound of horses hoofs borne upon the breeze. The Earl of Leicester, was immediately present to

her mind, and with a countenance full of terror she turned to Lord Dacre, and besought him to conduct her to some place of concealment.

“Be not so alarmed, mine own sweet love!” said Leonard. “They who approach may indeed be Leicester, with some of the creatures of his villany, but flinch you not for that, I will take a road which shall preclude the chance even of a meeting!”

Lord Dacre, hereupon turned his horse's head from the path which he had been lately pursuing, into a narrow ravine which ran for some way amid barren and precipitous rocks; suddenly the ground changed its character, the eminences grew less abrupt, and sterile, till on either side of the travellers rose gentle swelling hills, clothed even to their summits with woods. Still as they advanced, the woods thickened, and the eminences stretched into the distance, till Gertrude found herself travelling in a valley where the multitude of trees bestowed all the grace of forest scenery. Now too, as the sun

rose red as torch light, on the eastern verge of the horizon, and flung his rays athwart the valley, now it was that the chill splendors of the frost were pre-eminent. Oak, and beech, and tasseled hazel copse, wore the same radiant robe; clumps, and canopies, of white and dazling boughs, were tinged by the lurid sunbeam with such a faint and lovely pink, as blushes on the many colored opal: while if here and there the rime had melted from the clustered berries, or verdant wreathes of the holly bush, they did but make more beautiful by contrast, the twisted branches, and delicate tendrils which were still invested in its sparkling crust.

Ever and anon too, as our travellers passed through this valley, Gertrude caught a glimpse of a river that flowed at its foot. Some way further did they proceed, when a sudden opening discovered to her, rising dim and dark, the ruins of an ancient monastery. Spoliation, rather than time, seemed to have been the destruction of that venerable pile; for in the

lancet shaped windows, yet glittered some remnants of stained glass, and the slender shafts between those windows, had in more than one place been rudely shivered.

Lord Dacre now reined in his horse, and said. "Will it not seem meet to my gentle Gertrude, to plead for our lady's grace, amid the ruins of Lanercost?"

"Aye, dear lord!" answered Gertrude, "and believe I estimate that feeling which has conducted me hither!"

Hereupon Lord Dacre dismounting, lifted the maiden from her horse, and tethering both animals to a tree, he took her hand, to lead her towards the ruined chancel of the church. At that moment, the figure of a man, somewhat bent by age, issued from a copse at a little distance. He immediately perceived Lord Dacre, and his companion, and quickened his step to as much speed perhaps as his years, and infirmities would permit; but Lord Dacre still holding Gertrude by the hand advanced to meet him. Nothing could be more touching, or

venerable than the appearance of this old man ; a few locks of hair as white as silver, hung about his brow, his face, the outline of which was fine, had long been wasted and made pale by years and austerities ; his figure, which had once been tall, now drooped considerably in the shoulders, and his garment was a habit of the coarsest serge, fastened by a girdle about the waist. In his thin hands he held a bundle of sticks, which he had been apparently collecting in the coppice. In spite of the extreme poverty of his appearance, there was an air of serenity, a sort of superiority to suffering in the aged, but calm aspect of the old man, which won for him the respect of Gertrude.

“ Save you, my son !” he said, as Lord Dacre approached, “ what unwonted fortune at this time procures us your presence ?”

Good father Alban,” replied Leonard, “ I bring with me a young maid, who has done and suffered much in the right cause, yield her this reward, to hear a mass in the crypt of Laner-

cost, and receive a blessing from the Canons of St. Austin !”

“That, noble Dacre !” said the old monk, “is but a slight grace for you to demand, and one which over pays itself in the bestowal, if this damsel have indeed laboured in the cause of our suffering faith, she is but poorly paid by the warmest blessings of the last Prior of Lanercost !”

Gertrude bent her head to the murmured benediction of the ill-fated Prior ; and he then led the way towards the church. Ah, how sorrowfully and indignantly did her heart swell, as she looked upon that ruined temple of her religion, the graceful pointed arch rising solitary in mid air, and grass growing amongst the stones beneath its span, the tall columns garlanded with ivy, or prone upon the ground, half hidden by the nettles and nightshade ; while the altar had been torn down, and the sculptured form of the saint hurled from its canopied niche. Father Alban paused, as

he led the way among the grey ruins, and turning to his companions, he said—

“ Our good brother Basil is to say a mass for a sick stranger whom we found almost dying in the woods last night, of our faith he is, and a severe sufferer from the cruel vengeance of her whom the divine wrath has decreed as the ruler of these realms. Will it please you, dear lord, and this pious maiden, to think of the unhappy stranger in your prayers !”

“ A sufferer from the Queen’s vengeance, and a stranger !” exclaimed Gertrude, “ I pray you, good father, comes he from London ?”

“ Even so, as I believe, damsel,” answered father Alban, “ alas, I fear he is sick unto death, but his speech is forever of his daughter !”

“ To Gertrude the idea of her father was alone present, and she now pleaded in the most earnest terms for permission to see this sick stranger.

“ My daughter !” replied the monk, “ your wish shall be soon granted, I will hope thou

mayst not find thine own father in the unhappy stranger, but the prayer of youth is fervent, and its face is pleasant near the sick couch!"

As he spoke thus, the prior approached a portion of the ruins among which a cluster of high bushes had grown up, not perhaps by a mere chance. One of these bushes he pushed aside, and then discovered several stone steps, at the bottom of which appeared a low browed, arched entrance, apparently leading to the abbey vaults. Down these steps he summoned Lord Dacre and Gertrude: and on passing the arch, they found themselves in a long, low passage. Some little way from the entrance, a pale light issued apparently from a niche in the wall. When they arrived at this niche, Gertrude and Lord Dacre perceived a rude pedestal or altar, on which stood a little stone figure of St. Austin, the original patron of the abbey. Before this figure burned an iron lamp; which father Alban took from the chain on

which it hung, in order to light his companions through those murky passages, which habit would have enabled him to thread alone without its assistance.

They then proceeded, Lord Dacre endeavouring by the way to whisper comfort to Gertrude, whose fears suggested that the sick stranger could be no other than her father.

CHAPTER X.

Teodoro.—Mio freddo,
 Mio volto, il lagrimar tuo piu non sento,
 Dove sei Lodovica?

Lodovica.—A te prostrata,
 Fra le tue braccia.

Teodoro.—Ov'e la figlia mia?
 Piu non la sento. Ah le perdoni il cielo! (Muore.)

Lodovica.—Padre adorato! ei non è piu.
 Eufemio di Messina,
 FELlico.

SOME way did father Alban lead his companions among the vaults: till he arrived at one which he and his two poor brethren, the sad remnant of the once large and happy community, had fitted up as a dwelling. Here they were supported principally by such game and fish as they could catch in the woods and in the river,

fuel too they collected in the woods about the abbey, and such a small portion of bread and other necessaries as were needful to their slender wants, they procured by the sale of rush baskets, which part of their time was employed in weaving, and which were sold for them at Carlisle, by a peasant who dwelt on the borders of what had once been the abbey lands. This man too, yet adhering to the ancient faith, often indeed took a portion from his own little store to encrease the few comforts of the poor fathers: whose retreat he kept most carefully and faithfully concealed. Latterly indeed, the existence of those three poor monks, had become known to Lord Dacre, and with tears of gratitude did they receive from his hands an amount of gold, which he in bestowing it considered a small one, but which they declared would support with comparative luxuries the little remnant of their days.

The low door of the vault, which father Alban now opened, creaked heavily on its

hinges, and the faint voice of the invalid stranger, enquiring who was there was not heard except by the good brother Hilary who sat by his couch, and who, stooping to catch the sick man's words, screened his person for a moment, from the anxious gaze of Gertrude. This vault which she now entered, literally merited that name, the flooring was of the cold earth, and the ribbed arches which extended over it, were like the walls, of stone. The red smoky flame issuing from an iron lamp which hung from the centre arch, threw a dingy light on the surrounding objects. A small oaken table there was, and two or three joint stools, with a few cooking utensils piled in one corner, the fire which the monks were accustomed to kindle upon a broad iron plate, they had been obliged to extinguish, for as there was no outlet for the smoke, but by a narrow grating in the wall, and by the door way, it had too much incommoded the poor sick stranger. Two or three steps led from this vault into the crypt, and the wide massive doors at the summit of these

steps were now thrown open, in order to afford the sick person a view of what was passing at the altar: which brother Basil was preparing for the celebration of the mass. Upon the altar burned some tapers, purchased by the bounty of Lord Dacre, and several lamps of material and construction, similar to that in the vault, lighted up the old crypt. A solemn looking place it was, low roofed, and with the massive pillars, and round arches of the Saxon era. But devoted as was Gertrude to the altars of her crushed faith, she looked not towards the crypt, her eyes, her heart, sought only the sick stranger, and she sprung towards the humble pallet on which he lay extended; but who shall describe her feelings, when in the pale, pain-worn features, she did indeed recognize those of her father. A bandage encircled his brow, as if to hide some wound; and Gertrude, doomed to grow familiar even with death, traced too truly his horrible approaches in her father's face. At length her agony found words.

“ I have done this! I have murdered you,

my father! Oh this had not been, if I had not fled from London—if I had myself staid to glut the vengeance of Elizabeth!”

“Nay, my child!” said John Harding, “that had been to destroy thyself in vain! Thou hast done, Gertrude, even as I would have willed! But what blessed chance, my child, has brought thee here, and who is that cavalier who stands in the shade of the dark column? Mine eyes grow weak, and I dare not trust the hope, that in him I behold my ever dear and noble lord of Gilsland!”

At these words Lord Dacre, who had shrunk back in deference to the agony of Gertrude, advanced to the side of the sick man’s couch, and falling on his knees, bitterly reproached himself that he had ever implicated the unfortunate merchant in his own hazardous designs.

“Grieve you not for that, dear lord!” answered John Harding, “I am proud even to die in the cause of my religion, and of Queen Mary. I am happy once more to be-

hold my Gertrude, and to commend her to your generous care!"

"But how, my father!" sobbed Gertrude, "have you been reduced to this lamentable condition, or how have you escaped from your prison house?"

Then it was that John Harding, lifting the bandage that bound his brow, showed the yet unhealed wound of the branding iron, and detailed to his appalled daughter, the mode in which he had been driven from that city, where he was once honoured and beloved. It needed not the cruel taunt of Elizabeth, bidding him go seek his daughter, to send him, though penniless and on foot, upon the welcome task. In his toilsome journey, John Harding had not had reason to complain of inhumanity, firing and food had been afforded to him, by those whose charity was the more exemplary that their own portion was but scant. But the rigors of the season, and the continued walking had been too much for the frame of the merchant, already debilitated by

his imprisonment. He had wished to reach Rockcliffe Castle, where he had hoped to find Lord Dacre, but his strength had on the preceding evening totally failed him, and he sunk down in the woods of Lanercost, prepared to die; there he had been found by the benevolent monks, and by them he was conveyed to their own only secure retreat. Many were the tears which Gertrude shed during this recital, and scarce did the intelligence that her father had seen Lucy in safety, avail even for a space to check their course. On that day on which the lips of Elizabeth had pronounced his doom, John Harding had observed among the crowd the features of his niece, at the moment when horror stricken at the situation in which she beheld her father and uncle, the damsel had sunk senseless in her lover's arms. Amid the horrors of his own sentence, the magnanimous spirit of John Harding, had been not a little sustained by the knowledge that his beloved Lucy was at liberty, and that for her father,

the Queen had pronounced a doom less severe than that to which he was himself sentenced. He knew too that she was with Henry Willoughton, for he had been at no loss to surmise who was that muffled cavalier to whom Lucy had turned for protection in the paroxysm of her grief. More clearly too, were Gertrude and Lord Dacre, now able to develope that mysterious chain of circumstances, which was connected with the conspiracy of Babington, and the old house in Blackfriars.

The unfortunate secretary, Mancini, had in the tower, been confined in a cell which communicated with that of John Harding; and finding that his fellow prisoner was a Catholic, and the father of that beautiful damsel who had visited the ambassador; he revealed to the merchant all the tale of his imprudencies and his wrongs. Having when he hired it, and before his master's arrival in England, discovered some of those strange hiding places which the house in Blackfriars contained, he spoke of them as well adapted for their meet-

ings, to Babington and his friends, whom he knew to be engaged in a conspiracy against the government of Elizabeth. But that wily government had its spies ever on the alert, and they also became acquainted with the vaults, and the secret passages of Vitelli's house. Hence it was, that the plot of the conspirators was watched even from the very dawn of its existence. On the night when Lord Dacre visited the ambassador, Mancini had indeed gone to bed, after having conducted the dripping and half insane Babington to the deserted apartment which contained the secret door to the vaults, which door having been by accident left open, had admitted Gertrude to that apartment in the morning. But there Babington was met by an emissary of Leicester, the same who had in the morning sent the letter which had summoned that nobleman from the dwelling of Sir Philip Wynyard, at Eltham, to the house in Blackfriars, where he was lurking himself, to discover Babington, when he met Gertrude in the gallery. Man

cini knew not that that gallery communicated with the vaults. By this emissary of Leicester, was Babington stabbed, and it was his groan which excited the attention of Lord Dacre and Vitelli, and his blood, which they found scattered on the floor: the government spy having already conveyed him away by the secret door, which they could not discover. From the vaults however where that spy was compelled to leave him, Babington was carried by his own associates to the cottage of Cicely Merton and her husband. All these particulars had Mancini detailed to John Harding, who now repeated them to his daughter, and Lord Dacre, with the additional intelligence that the unfortunate youth had died upon the rack, whereon, after all his confessions, he had been again placed, under the supposition that he had yet more to reveal. Of the fate too, of Babington and his associates, the merchant thought there could be little doubt, as they were committed for trial, and could scarcely disprove the truth of the

most weighty charges against them. It was yet, for the friends of the unhappy Mary to learn, how the craft of Walsingham could mix her with the most criminal portion of Babington's rash designs. As to the premature discovery of the proposed attempt of Lord Dacre and his friends, the Percy and the Nevil, it had been developed, chiefly by the cunning espionage of Bertha Allen, and the shameless treachery of Rudolphi, who, the moment he found a possibility of danger to himself, revealed the whole design, and threw the blame of its concealment, upon the spy, Mistress Allen.

Gertrude meanwhile had scarce listened to this recital, she was absorbed in sorrow for her father, who spoke as one whose hours on earth were numbered. His endearments even, the fond pressure of his cold damp hand, the praises which he lavished on her dauntless journey to the north; all served only to pierce her heart with a deeper sorrow. She thought on the splendours of Elizabeth and Leicester,

and then looking to her father's low couch and dreary place of shelter, the bitterness of her repining spirit, found a tongue.

"Are these the rewards of virtue, oh my father, why are you stretched here in misery to die, while your foes are still triumphant, while the power of wickedness prevails?"

"Forbear, my daughter!" said the aged Prior Alban, "weigh not the divine wisdom in the balance with thy filial grief; lest of a virtue you make a fault!"

"Ah, my Gertrude!" said John Harding, "impugn not in my behalf that retribution which is just. If pity has been denied to me, there was a time when I was pitiless, nay, towards a miserable object meet only for compassion, for long years did I nourish nought but cruelty, and scorn. Oh, blessed be that heaven, which though it has stricken, gives me grace to feel the justice of the blow, and blessed be that mercy which has brought thee to my couch, whose charitable spirit may yet perhaps, in part repair the evil to which thy

father's pride and cruelty gave birth. A mournful secret, my Gertrude must I now disclose. The time was when I had a sister, an innocent, beautiful sister, oh how proud was I of that beauty which was her bane !"

"Your sister, my father !" exclaimed Gertrude, as all the horrors of the preceding evening seemed oppressing her again. "Oh, your unhappy sister, nought now may benefit her on earth !"

"Do you know ? have you seen her ?" said John Harding in a hollow tone, raising himself on his couch, and fixing his failing eyes on the countenance of his daughter. "Oh, did she tell how I, who had so loved her, spurned her harshly from my feet ; and hurled her back to ruin, and to Leicester, and more than all, did she tell how, by a horrible, mistake the dagger of the false lord drank my brother's blood, for mine. Oh, my dear brother, my blooming, bright haired Edmund, ill was the oath I took, that your ashes should never find a grave, till I had avenged your death with that

of your unfortunate sister ; more evil it was when for years I mourned only that I could not, to execute that oath, find the retreat to which she had been conveyed !”

“ But more charitable dispositions, my son, have I hope, in latter years been fostered in your heart !” said the Prior.

“ My heart did indeed too late awaken, father, to better thoughts,” replied John Harding, “ and the dearest proof of her affection which my daughter can now bestow, will be in the promise of pity, and christian kindness to my betrayed, and ill fated Euphrasia.”

“ Alas, my father !” murmured Gertrude, “ kindness, or cruelty, will in this world affect your sister no more. But may it be some slight solace to your sorrow, to know that her dying head was pillowed on the bosom of your child, that her winding-sheet was folded by your daughter’s hand !”

“ Severe is the justice of heaven !” moaned John Harding, “ and my repentance is too late ! Oh, my Gertrude, when was it that you

so attended on your miserable aunt, tell me, and the cause of her death?"

"Last night, father, did she depart!" answered Gertrude; she hesitated to reply to the latter portion of the question, but John Harding repeated it, charging her on her duty to deceive him not.

"Alas, my father!" said Gertrude, "she had swallowed poison, administered, I fear me, by the Earl!"

"Oh, Euphrasia! oh my sister!" groaned John Harding; then after a bitter pause, he turned to the Prior, and asked "if there might be mercy for him, who had shown no mercy to a sister!"

"Alas, my son!" answered Alban, "it was indeed a grievous fault, but who shall say there is no mercy, for any sinner who repenteth!"

"And mine own time on earth vanisheth apace;" said John Harding, "and fain would I once more witness the celebration of those holy mysteries, which the hard decrees of

Elizabeth deny to the suffering children of the faith!"

"And even now, my son, was I about to propose their celebration!" said Basil, who had left the crypt on the entrance of Lord Dacre and Gertrude: but who now returned thither followed by father Hilary, and soon appeared at the little stone altar, vested to offer the mass. Gertrude would have knelt by her father's side, where she could see all that was passing in the crypt, but John Harding motioned her away. "At the altar, my child, at the altar of thy God; kneel there with my good Lord Dacre, and solicit grace for the parting spirit of thy father!"

Thus bidden, Gertrude left the prior only, kneeling by her father's couch, and for once unwilling, she took the extended hand of Lord Dacre, and ascending the steps which led into crypt, knelt with him at its altar's foot. More had the ancient faith of its pomp of ritual, when of old it was administered in the face of

day, in the splendid abbey church of Lanercost: but never more of majesty, of awe, than in that hour of its mourning, when one only of its faithful servants, stood at the altar of the darksome crypt. A deep and mellow voice had father Basil, and its full, melancholy tones sunk impressively upon the heart, as they rung under the ribbed arches of the crypt. And most musical, and melancholy too, was the slight sound of the silver bell, preserved amid their poverty, which father Hilary rung at the elevation of the host. Pensive and ghostly, was the light of the pale lamps and glimmering tapers, trembling over the massive columns, as if only to show the shadows that lurked between them; and gleaming more strongly upon the carving of the altar, upon the huge stone crucifix erected there, and the statues of the Virgin, and Saint Austin, that graced the niches on either side. Then too, there were the thin countenances, the white locks, and drooping figures of Basil and his assistant, and at the altar's foot, his rich habit contrasting

with the gloom of the place, Lord Dacre, his head bent in prayer, and the softer form of Gertrude kneeling alike in devotion and sorrow at his side; while in the far background was faintly discernible the couch of the dying man, with the prior leaning over it, while John Harding made his confession. The mass was over, and all those rites with which the Catholic church seeks to support her children in their parting hour, had been administered to the merchant; he had partaken of the bread of life, and the sacred oil of extreme unction had been applied to his feet and to his hands. His breath grew fainter, and his eyes closed, as if in sleep, then he started, and looking towards the prior, faintly expressed his wish to die upon the altar's step.

Tenderly was he conveyed thither, and Gertrude hushing for his sake, the agony of her grief, knelt at his side, clasping his hand fast in her's. Once, after he was thus extended, he turned to Lord Dacre, and as that nobleman bent over him, he whispered a few words, of

which Gertrude caught only the sound of her own name. The reply seemed most grateful to the dying man, for while pressing the hand of his daughter, a sudden smile broke over his countenance; the next moment, however, it disappeared, and the words, "Oh, my sister!" passed with their last breath, from the lips of John Harding.

CHAPTER XI.

Lord Dacre spread the banner free,
That waved in gales of Galilee."

SCOTT.

Oh Christ ; it was a grief to see,
And likewise far to hear,
The cries of men lying in their gore,
And scattered here and there.
They closed full fast on every side,
No slackness there was found,
And many a gallant gentleman,
Lay gasping on the ground.

CHEVY CHASE.

It was a sharp morning at the end of January,
and a sunbeam as bright, though not as fervid,
as that of summer, shone upon the towers of
Lord Dacre's castle of Rockcliffe, and danced

among the trees, and shrubs, which fringed the ice bound waters of the Eden, on whose banks that castle stood. The bustle, and preparations of war, were manifest in the fortress; culverins, and falcons were ranged upon the walls; throngs of armed men crowded the courts; bold and stalwart borderers, well skilled, either to draw the bow, or wield the pike and brand. A group of cavaliers and ladies stood upon the great tower of the castle, looking anxiously on the road to Carlisle. Armed, but unhelmed, were the cavaliers, and one of them standing on the verge of the tower, gazed even more anxiously towards Carlisle, than his companions. Two ladies approached him, one attired in a deep mourning habit, the other a graceful dame, with blue eyes, and floating flaxen locks.

“Most noble Lord Dacre,” said the latter, “truly thy voracious appetite for hard blows has awakened a terror in my breast, lest, should Marmaduke bring news that the churlish Hunsdon refuses thee the battle, thou mayst

even wreak thy wrath on the head of thy messenger: and it must be a stout helm, I think, to stand its wearer in good stead against a blow of thine at this precise moment. Then, as if such a terror for my husband, were not a sufficient evil for the passing time, I have here our pensive Gertrude Harding, looking daggers at me for impugning so much the impartiality of thy justice!"

"Fear not for Marmaduke, gentle Mistress Norton!" answered Lord Dacre. "For in sooth, we have determined that Hunsdon shall fight whether he will or no, we do but wait the return of Master Marmaduke, to intercept the army of the baron, if he refuse our challenge and endeavor to pass on to Carlisle."

"Are you so resolved to dare the field?" whispered Gertrude in a timid tone.

"Blench you, my gallant one?" said Lord Dacre, as he looked upon her pale lip. "Oh, Gertrude, do not lack on my behalf, that courage which never failed you on your own. Smile rather, sweet lady of mine heart's dear

love, and grant me this favor for the battle field !”

So saying, Lord Dacre playfully snatched a knot of ribbon from her dress.

“ Ah, no, not that !” exclaimed Gertrude in an agitated tone. “ Not a symbol from a mourning robe !”

“ Why thou recreant to thy soul’s firmness !” said Lord Dacre, “ what matters the color of a ribbon, if it be the gift of a true hand, and a truer heart !”

“ Yet will not I place a sable ribbon on thy crest !” answered Gertrude.

At this moment, the quick eye of Leonard being again directed towards the road to Carlisle, he perceived in the distance a party of horsemen approaching.

“ If I mistake not !” he then said, turning to the elder Norton, “ yonder, good sir, cometh thy gallant son, Marmaduke ; I do hope that Hunsdon will accept our challenge !”

"Dear lord, I do hope so too!" replied the gallant old man.

Gertrude heard these remarks, and leaning over the battlements, she uttered a deep sigh. That sigh caught the ear of Blanche Norton.

"Now shame on thee, Gertrude," she whispered, "dost thou fear, when I, even, am full of courage and hope?"

"Oh, gentle friend!" answered Gertrude, "'tis the amount of my hope, which gives birth to its sister fear; but yonder indeed comes thy brave husband, let us trust that if Hunsdon accepts the challenge of my lord, that the victory will rest with those whose swords are unsheathed for the right cause!"

Even while Gertrude spoke, a gallant looking party of about fifty horsemen, led by Marmaduke Norton, came galloping along the road beneath the castle. They had been sent by Leonard to meet the army of Lord Hunsdon, then hastening to join at Carlisle, the other

forces of Elizabeth, under the command of Lord Scrope, the Warden of the Scottish Marches. It had been expected that Lord Hunsdon would have laid siege to Rockcliffe, but as no symptoms of such a design appeared on his approach, Lord Dacre had commissioned Marmaduke Norton to bear his defiance to the Queen's general.

With how much anxiety the return of the youth to Rockcliffe was awaited, we have already said. News too, there had been in the last few days, of an incursion of some of Queen Mary's Scottish partisans; the border clans of the Scots, and Kers, incited it was believed by the Earl of Westmoreland; and this news did not lower the spirits of Lord Dacre and his friends. Meanwhile, on came Marmaduke and his horsemen, the points of their pikes glittering in the sunbeams, and the white pennon which he bore at the end of his lance, dancing in the brisk wind. Lord Dacre hastened to meet his friend in the court of the castle.

"How now, Marmaduke, what news from the Baron of Hunsdon?"

"He greets you well, noble lord!" said young Norton, vaulting from his horse, "but he wills not to taste, unless it be upon compulsion, of our border prowess, nay, I will not wound your ear, by repeating the despiteful terms in which it pleaseth him to refuse the combat!"

"Nay, then!" said Leonard Dacre, "since he denieth us the combat in knightly courtesy, we must even force it from him in churlishness akin to his own. What say ye, my merry men, have ye no mind for a brisk ride, and a brisk fight this sharp morning; we shall in truth banquet poorly to-morrow, if Hunsdon sup to-night at Carlisle!"

"An' he do!" said one of the archers, "we will first whet his stomach with a cloth yard shaft!"

"Or try the temper of his steel jerkin with a volley of round shot!" said an arquebusier.

Then there rung a deafening peal through the courts of the castle.

“To the field! and long live our gallant Lord Dacre of Gilsland!”

Orders were issued for an immediate sally of the garrison, to intercept Lord Hunsdon on his way to Carlisle; and having given these orders, Leonard withdrew for a brief space into the castle.

The courage of the gentle Blanche now failed, and when she learned that Lord Dacre was indeed resolved to hazard an engagement, she hung weeping upon her husband's neck. As for Gertrude Harding, she had withdrawn to her chamber and knelt in earnest prayer, while the castle rung with all the din of war, and troop after troop of armed men sallied from beneath the arched and Gothic gateway, the ponderous and raised portcullis, glooming above them. Tears meanwhile flowed down the face of Gertrude, something had her late calamities subdued the high tone of her spirit; she was yet oppressed by the dying agonies of

her unhappy aunt, and the last faintly murmured accents of her father, full often rung sadly in her ears. Lord Dacre, the idolized of her soul, was now the object that by right, no less than inclination, claimed the dearest portion of her love; oh, she had not forgotten that dying smile, with which her poor father had hailed Leonard's whispered assurance of the love he bore the merchant's lowly child, and more did she rejoice in that love which so soothed his spirit in its flight. And impassioned and generous as was the affection of Lord Dacre, bearing down even in its mighty current, the long established barriers of his ancestral pride, did he fully estimate the amount of that love which Gertrude bore to him? Oh, no, not he the idolized object of her love, could image to himself that love's excess. All the vigor of her mind, all the glow of her imagination, all the exquisite tenderness of her heart, were alike called into action by her preference for him, and he who had awakened her to such an extatic enjoyment of her own feel-

ings, seemed more a god to worship than a man to love. No, not even Leonard Dacre could fully understand how a powerful mind, so far from freeing woman from the weaknesses of that passion, which is the very destiny of her sex, rather makes her their willing victim; the strong mind serving to quicken the natural susceptibility of the deceitful heart.

And now, as we have said, Gertrude knelt even in an agony of prayer, while the tumult of war resounded in the castle; but above that tumult she heard a knock upon her chamber door. Hastily drying her tears, she rose, and opened it, and lo, before her stood the object of her thoughts, glittering in that dreadful panoply, whose brightness she shuddered to behold. He wore his helmet, but his vizor was raised; and his eyes, those dark and brilliant eyes, whose eloquence had first fascinated the spirit of Gertrude, were now bent down upon her, speaking such a world of tenderness as mocked the feeble utterance of the tongue. A horrible foreboding seized her soul, as the mailclad arms

of Lord Dacre closed around her slender form, and when he clasped her passionately to his breast: her tears dimmed the lustre of his corselet, and the terror of her heart found speech. "And if we should never meet again, my love?"

"Nay, doubt it not! and when success has crowned us in the field, then will I upbraid you with this mournful parting!"

"Heaven grant that you may so upbraid me!" answered Gertrude.

At this moment a loud blast of the trumpet announced that the party headed by Marmaduke Norton, had sallied from the castle gates. Little time was there for the oft repeated looks, the whispered cautions of a timid love. One passionate embrace, one long and lingering kiss, and Gertrude was left weeping and alone.

Meantime the army of Lord Hunsdon pressed on a rapid march to Carlisle, which city, it was that nobleman's especial desire to reach, uninterrupted by the forces of Lord Dacre. It was after he had dismissed Marmaduke Nor-

ton, that the troops of Lord Hunsdon were winding among the alternately wooded and rocky eminences, which overhung the deep narrow glen, that forms the channel of the river Gelt. He was himself riding a little apart, with several of his principal officers, and was somewhat surprised when a knight in gay armour, and mounted on a noble charger, spurred suddenly from the cover of the dark woods.

Two men, wearing corslets and steel caps, followed this knight, apparently his retainers. The knight with an air, as if his company must needs be acceptable wherever he vouchsafed to bestow it, rode straight up to the commander-in-chief; but that honorable baron happened to be a very blunt, and plain-spoken person, and one too who had no extraordinary veneration for a suit of armour, merely because it glistened with gold. In truth, the honest baron thought the appearance of the stranger somewhat too gay, to be warlike, and

his embossed armour fitter for a tilting match with blunt lances, than a fray with borderers, who dealt in blows, not to be given by a "lady's fan." Under the impulse of these thoughts, then it was, that Lord Hunsdon, extended the truncheon which he carried in his hand, exclaiming in a haughty tone—

"Keep thy distance, sir glittering knight! we admit not every wanderer of the wayside among the hosts of Queen Elizabeth, because forsooth, the varlet can go pranked as for a pageant!"

"Gracious Baron of Hunsdon!" said the stranger, in a sneering voice, "wilt thou not admit me to some speech with thee?"

"No, truly!" answered the baron, "address thy speech to my good Lord Morden, here!"

And as he spoke, he pointed with his truncheon to that young nobleman, who rode on his right hand. The stranger tossed his head, and the white plumes upon his helmet cer-

tainly waved in a most majestic manner; but their dignity in no wise moved the imperturbable Hunsdon.

"Dost thou positively refuse to speak to me?" said the knight, "thou churlish lord, thou wouldst speak me fair were my vizor raised!"

"I would even speak thee then, according to thy deserts!" answered Hunsdon.

"Wilt thou give me the command of a hundred demi lances?" inquired the stranger.

"Give thee the command!" said Lord Hunsdon, in a voice of great anger, "fellow! fellow! go thy ways in peace, or I will order my grooms to strip thee of thy finery, and whip thee through the ranks!"

"Nay, my good lord," said the knight, "I will spare thee, even in compassion, the issuing of that order, which would go hard with thee if once delivered!" With these words he lifted his vizor, and displayed, to the vexed eyes of Lord Hunsdon, the countenance of the Earl of Leicester.

"How say you now, my lord?" said the latter, with a malicious laugh, "wilt order thy grooms to whip me through the ranks, or even give me the hundred lances?"

"Knows our royal cousin of this enterprise, my lord?" enquired Hunsdon.

"Nay, her grace knows it not!" answered Leicester, with an air of insolent indifference. "Out of pure love and loyalty, have I ventured to leave London without her knowledge. Could I suffer others to be in arms, and not myself strike a blow for my gracious, my idolized queen?"

"I will not give thee the demi lances!" said Lord Hunsdon, in a dogged tone. "The Queen knows nothing, thou dost own, of thy journey, and had she willed, she would have known it, thy secrecy will occasion her displeasure! We will give thee no command under us?"

"You will not?" said the earl.

"I will not!" said the baron.

Leicester now rode closer to him, and spoke in a more serious tone.

"Hark you, my good Lord of Hunsdon, think you the anger of the Queen will lie as light upon your neck as upon mine?"

A shrug of the shoulders and a grumbling.—

"It ought!" was all the general's reply.

"Good lack, my lord!" said Leicester, in a low but mocking tone. "Do the affairs of this world ever take that course they ought to take, how well would be the condition of my honest Lord of Hunsdon, if they did!"

"Aye, aye," answered Hunsdon shortly, "and did the world wag as it ought, how ill would be the condition of my dainty Earl of Leicester!"

"And in the present condition of this wicked world," said Leicester, "I take it my Lord Hunsdon will yet let me have the hundred lances! Hark you, my lord," he added in a whisper, "If I have them not, I will make my cause good with Queen Elizabeth."

“Thou must have them I suppose!” growled Lord Hunsdon. Then he mumbled to himself—“The times prosper with recreants and fools!” After thus venting his spleen, he gave the order which Leicester had requested, but as the men wheeled round, and placed themselves under his command, the stout baron could not resist the opportunity of a rude joke, and he called to Leicester—“Have a care, my lord, that scathe happen not to thee, keep thou in the rearward of the fight, if we encounter the rough borderers, lest a chance arrow, or an ill-directed lance mar the excellence of thy beauty! and it were then indeed hard for me to procure grace, or pardon from the Queen!”

“Oh, never fear me for that!” answered Leicester, “I will take all proper care of mine own person!”

“The fiend doubt thee for that!” muttered Hunsdon to himself as the earl rode away. “And he will spare thee for awhile, in that he

is sure of thee at last; thou pernicious coward, thou false and cunning caitiff!"

Meanwhile, Lord Hunsdon and his army were now approaching a high moor stretching from some of the most precipitous of the rocks which overhung the river, tufts of straggling bushes skirted this moor, on that side which was approached by Lord Hunsdon and his forces; and on the banks of the Gelt, an old oak had here and there struck its gnarled roots between the cliffs of the rocks, the surface of the moor itself was rugged, and dotted over by huge patches of the prickly furze. The natural position of this moor was such as to command the road through which the army of Lord Hunsdon was passing at the time. In that army were not only Lord Morden, but Sir Philip Wynyard, and Sir George Bowes. Scarcely had the foremost rank of the royalists set foot upon the boundaries of the moor, when they were assailed by a shower of arrows and small shot, directed, they speedily found, from the cover of those bushes by which it was

skirted. At the same moment, as if by magic, groups of armed men rose out of the furze among which they had lain concealed, and the quick eye of Lord Hunsdon glancing along the higher ground of the moor, perceived it occupied by the forces of Lord Dacre. The unexpected discharge of the arrows and shot startled the soldiers of Lord Hunsdon, and a moment decided with them the chances between flight and a valorous resistance, but the tones of their commander were like thunder in their ears; their antagonists were now in sight, and the arquebusiers of the royal army, poured in a volley of shot, which did fearful execution. The discharge of the foe, meanwhile, had not been without effect, and on the level ground which bordered that side of the moor which had been approached by the Queen's forces, lay many of her soldiers either wounded or dead. A long space there was between the straggling bushes that edged the moor, and here a body of pikemen, under the command of Marmaduke Norton, made a desperate charge upon the royalists.

With a sort of frantic energy they rushed on, bearing down all before them, upon the sharp points of their weapons, while the fire arms of their opponents becoming useless, a hand to hand fight ensued; the wild valor of the borderers was of a nature, however, which soon exhausted itself, and that steady determination with which the royal forces received their headlong charge, again turned the tide of the battle: and Marmaduke's party were driven back upon the moor, over the bodies of the slain and wounded, both of their own party, and their foes. Then it was, the hoofs of the horse came thundering over the field, braining in the mad onset, many an unhappy wretch who had been borne down by the current of the fight. At the head of this body of horse was Lord Dacre, he had perceived his friend Marmaduke driven back from the charge, he knew that did his troops once yield, that all was lost, and that their wild enthusiasm once checked by the symptoms of defeat, that their foes would then win the day from the advantage of their

superior numbers. He pressed to the point, at which he could perceive the plume on the helmet of Marmaduke, tossing over the steel caps of his soldiers.

There was a mighty shock as Lord Dacre and his followers encountered the main body of the Queen's forces; then ensued a hideous scene, men and horses rolling together on the ground, friends, and foes mingled in the fell confusion; Lord Dacre's horse had been shot under him, and as he extricated himself from the fallen steed, a heavy blow fell upon his shoulder, and a voice which even amid the horrible tumult, the ringing of falchions, and the groans of the wounded, he knew for that of his opponent of Barnard Castle, Sir Philip Wynyard, defied him to the conflict.

"Traitor of Gilsland, twice the conqueror of Philip Wynyard, thou shalt not again escape me!"

Sir Philip, like his antagonist, had been unhorsed, and so far the fight was equal; but the excessive passion of the knight, while it called

upon all the dexterity of his foe, exposed himself to every disadvantage, from his superior coolness. He allowed Lord Dacre no rest, he compelled him as it were to press him on to death, though the blood flowed in many places over his bright armour, he relaxed not in his fury, abandoning all defensive care, in the bitterness of his rage. Lord Dacre, meanwhile, by the stream of the fight had been borne with Sir Philip to the edge of some shelving ground, the eyes of the knight flashed fire, could he deprive his antagonist of his footing, the victory were his own. He dropped his sword, and flinging his arms round the person of Lord Dacre, endeavoured to hurl him down the sloping descent. The turf on the edge of that hollow was, alas, wet with blood, and Sir Philip's own foot slipping, his weight and his strong grasp bore down his adversary, they rolled to the bottom of the hollow, but by an almost supernatural exertion of strength, Lord Dacre managed to get Sir Philip under him;

and to wrench himself from that deadly grasp.

The knight then felt for his dagger, but the sword of his antagonist passing through a broken rivet in his armour, his hand dropped nerveless by his side, his last bitter execration was choked by the lifeblood which bubbled in his throat, and Lord Dacre turned from his slain foe, preparing to rush again into the thickest of the fight.

The roar of the battle still echoed hoarsely among the surrounding rocks and through the dark woods; but Leonard stamped his mailed heel in the bitterness of his rage and grief, when he perceived the royalists advancing over the moor, and manifestly beginning to bear his followers before them. He caught by the bridle a steed, the master of which had been slain; he vaulted on its back, he gathered together the broken body of his pikemen, and led them again to the charge: but vain was his valour, his own heroic determination—in

vain it was that the ranks of the enemy were thinned by that desperate charge, when a troop of Halberdiers, galled by the steady fire of a column of the Queen's forces under the command of Lord Morden, wavered, yielded, and at last fairly took to flight. Leaving the pikemen to pursue that advantage which they had gained, Lord Dacre galloped across the field, bearing down all impediments in his impetuous course, and calling, in tones hoarse with excitement, upon the runaways to return. Neither his voice, nor his example, could reanimate the panic-stricken soldiers, and while they fled before the now advancing column, he was left, with his horse again slain under him on the field. Then it was that he was assailed by two of the Royalists soldiers, by whom he had been recognised, and who hoped to secure him as their prisoner. In vain it was that he turned with the speed of thought from side to side, raining blows like hail upon the plated coats of his adversaries—human strength could not long have held to so unequal a contest ;

but at that moment Marmaduke Norton, unhelmed, pale, and covered with blood, staggered towards him, followed by a few faithful borderers. But poor Marmaduke sunk down ere he could strike a blow for the rescue of his friend; a heavy stroke however from one of the borderers, stretched the chief assailant of Lord Dacre senseless by his side, and the other finding himself surrounded by the little band who had abided by Marmaduke, turned to fly; but the borderers enraged by their defeat, pressed hard upon him, and he fell with his steel headpiece literally battered through his skull. Meanwhile the triumph of the Royalists was complete, here and there a small but gallant band collected in scattered groups over the moor, vainly attempted to fan into a flame the decaying embers of the fight.

Far away were seen the main body of Lord Dacre's troops, overpowered by numbers, flying for very life over the rocks and hills. Gradually too those still resisting groups were thinned, either as those, the unyielding and the gallant,

who composed them, sunk slain upon the field, or as finding the inefficiency of resistance they likewise submitted to the foe. Among the rocks which overhung the river too, was yet a sprinkling of the groups, and fearful was the contest, waged in more than one instance, as to which party should urge their opponents over the rocks; then as either one or the other was pressed to the brink of the precipice, came a crashing among the leafless shrubs, or the ringing of their steel array upon the bare points of the rocks, and anon, a dull sound, and a sullen splash, as their mangled bodies broke the ice which had crusted the surface of the river. Nor had the royalists obtained an easy, or a bloodless victory, the number of slain was nearly equal on both sides; but the headlong and undisciplined valor of the borderers had led them to break their lines in pursuing the enemy, and when they were thus thrown into confusion, the superior numbers of the Queen's forces had of course secured to them that advantage, which Lord

Dacre had foreseen, when he first observed the disorder of his own troops.

Still surrounded by the little troop of borderers who had fought by the side of Marmaduke, till he fell, Leonard bent in bitter anguish over his friend. It was a brief parting: a few detached sentences broke from the lips of the dying man.

“All is lost, Dacre! my father still bears up the fight, oh, seek him out, let not the old man be slain, and fly with him to Scotland! Oh! my Blanche! Dear Dacre have a care for her!” And thus the gallant spirit departed, and Lord Dacre only supported the corpse of his friend.

But the trumpet of the enemy at that moment sounded to recall Lord Morden from the pursuit, and his troops bore back upon the field. Then it was, that the standard of the Dacres was once more raised, by a band of brave borderers, who had faithfully guarded it through all the dangers of the battle. Then it was, that the gallant few who had still pro-

longed the remnants of the fight, rallied about their noble chief; a hundred horsemen and perhaps twice as many foot, presenting to the foe, a bristling fence of pikes and lances, and securing at least an honorable retreat. The elder Norton, with two of his sons, Edward and George, had joined this gallant party; inch by inch almost did they retire from the moor; and it was not for the broken troops of Lord Morden to attack them. They were fairly clear of the battle field, and then it was that Lord Dacre perceived a band of lances, which amid the tumult of the fight he had observed hovering on its skirts, but not taking any conspicuous share in the conflict; then it was that he perceived this same body of lances bearing at a furious rate along the road to Rockliffe Castle. A horrible apprehension immediately seized him, a sufficient number of the garrison had been left in the castle to guard the females. But those who had first fled from the battle—had the gates been opened to them,

and had the garrison then proved faithful to its trust, or dismayed by the panic of their defeated comrades, would they attempt an escape from Rockcliffe? Lord Dacre turned to Edward Norton, a few words served him in that bitter moment, he spoke of Marmaduke's death, and then he saw the head of the gallant old man, his father, droop over his horse's neck, and the arm of a stout borderer stretched out to support him. Lord Dacre bade the youth take the command of the party, and fly with his father towards Scotland: something too he then said, he scarce himself knew what, of Gertrude and of Blanche; and the next moment accompanied by about twenty horsemen, he was riding at headlong speed towards Rockcliffe. One of these horsemen kept close at his rein.

"My lord!" said the horseman.

But Leonard Dacre did not hear him, his soul was absorbed in the agony of defeat; an indefinable sense of an overwhelming calamity.

The review of each proud hope now humbled to the dust, the shadows cast upon his future lot, the bitter sorrow for those who had fallen in his cause, the pining, wasting discontent of an ambitious spirit, condemned for ever to inactivity, these were the separate drops of gall lurking in the dregs of that cup, which was now presented brimming over with misery to his lip. But those gall drops were to be tasted at a future time, when the bitter draught was well nigh drained. But now, yet warm from the excitement of the conflict, yet smarting under the shame of a defeat, and agonized with thoughts of Leicester, of Gertrude, and of the gentle Blanche, Lord Dacre's mind was a kind of chaos. At length he came with his followers in sight of Rockliffe Castle.

"My lord!" again exclaimed the horseman at his rein, and Dacre, breathing in the sight of Rockliffe, could now hear the soldier's voice.

"Aye, my good Norbert!"

“ Were it not well to take the ladies for a few days to Lanercost, the good monks will gladly conceal them ; and the country will be hot with the Queen’s troops, you too, my lord, would be safe at the abbey !”

Norbert was that peasant who had been accustomed to tend on, and assist the poor monks : and he had enrolled himself under the banner of Lord Dacre.

“ If we meet the worst, my friend,” said Leonard Dacre, “ it may be well indeed to seek the concealment which you name, but we must for Scotland if we can !”

“ Oh, my lord, but see there !” exclaimed Norbert, as a sudden turn of the road brought them in sight of the castle gates, and galloping as if for life, Lord Dacre and his followers perceived those whom they had left in charge of the females. Some of the runaways too, did the quick eye of Norbert detect among them, and the fluttering garments of a female form. Lord Dacre’s vizor was raised, and

Norbert was startled by his pale lip and glaring eye, he ventured to speak.

“Be of heart, my good lord, the ladies, Blanche and Gertrude, are no doubt both with the garrison, who feared that Lord Hunsdon would attack the castle !”

Leonard made no reply, but pointed upward to the castle gates, from which at that moment issued the band of lances which he had noticed galloping with such precipitate haste towards Rockliffe. A woman's shriek rang through the air, Lord Dacre did not heed that his horse leaped over the bodies of some slain soldiers; his own soldiers who had fled from the battle. A few desperate bounds placed his courser by the side of the leader of those lances. A female was in his arms, and it needed not her voice, her outstretched arms, to tell him that female was Gertrude Harding; the vizor too of the ravisher was raised, and in him Lord Dacre beheld the Earl of Leicester: he caught hold of his bridle rein, but the

attendants of the earl spurred between them, and closed around their master. The followers too of Lord Dacre did not slack, and they boldly charged the lances of the Earl—thrice were they repelled, and thrice did they return to the conflict. But the partizans of Leicester were a hundred, and those of Lord Dacre numbered little more than a score; it was a useless and horrible effusion of blood, they were mown down like ripe wheat before the sickle. Not altogether unavenged, however, did they fall, the heart's blood, and the dying groans of some of the earl's soldiers, mingled with theirs. As for Leicester, he had hitherto kept himself safe ensconced with the maiden in the midst of his followers, leaving it to them to defend him from the obstinate valor of Lord Dacre, and that gallant few by whom he was accompanied. Now, however, that their numbers were thinned, and but some half dozen borderers were left to assist Leonard in forcing that impenetrable girdle of men and

horses, which had hitherto secured his infamous rival; the latter ordered his men to wheel aside, and then follow him towards Carlisle. Then it was that as that circle opened, and Leicester urged his horse into a bound, then it was, though wounded, and well nigh sinking with fatigue, that Lord Dacre dismounted, sprung forwards, and hung upon the bridle of Leicester's horse: his sword was yet in his hand, but the craven Earl interposed the maiden as his shield, still holding her with a giant's grasp; and Lord Dacre was dragged some way by the restive horse.

"Leicester," he cried, "yield up the maiden! coward! thou shalt have justice yet!"

At that moment a tremendous blow upon the head felled him to the earth: and the earl, released from the grasp upon his bridle, galloped away with his prize.

That blow was not unavenged. Norbert, who yet trod closely upon the footsteps of his lord, was a powerful man, and turning towards the soldier who dealt that dastard stroke, he twined

his arms about him with a kind of herculean strength, and dragged him from his horse. The other followers of Leicester, with little care for their comrade, were already hastening after their lord. The knee of Norbert was on the soldier's breast, his hand upon his throat, and the latter struggled vainly to rise, while his face grew black with convulsion: the eye of Norbert fell for a moment upon the apparently lifeless body of Lord Dacre, and with an emotion of savage delight, such as he had never before felt; he took a long knife from his bosom, and drew it across the throat of his antagonist. The keen blade, and vengeful hand of Norbert, half severed the head from the body, but such a death even, added but little horror to the naturally grim aspect of the robber Miles; for he it was, who had been one of those followers who had in the morning sallied with the Earl of Leicester from the wood. The other was that false retainer of the Earl of Westmoreland, who had accepted a bribe from the infamous Ralph,

and had assisted to convey Gertrude from the Castle of Raby.

The care of the faithful Norbert and the few other attendants, who were now left to the unfortunate Lord Dacre, was immediately addressed to his recovery: but whether he were stunned, or dead, they were at first unable to decide.

CHAPTER XII.

Alma, ch' avesti più la fede cara
E'l nome quasi, ignoto, e peregrina,
Al tempo nostro, della castidade,
Che la tua vita, e la tua verde etade.

ANZIMO.

IT was on the night after the defeat of Lord Dacre, that the sound of a key grating in a dungeon door, roused from the lethargy of grief, an unfortunate captive in the castle of Carlisle. Two figures entered, one the goaler, who set a lamp upon the stone floor of the dungeon and withdrew. The other person then advanced, he was a tall and handsome man, and the plume of white feathers which waved in his

black velvet cap, was fastened there by a large ruby.

The captive, a female, had turned her head at the moment of his entrance, but when she caught a glimpse of his features she cowered down, and hid her face as if in horror, upon her couch of straw.

"Gertrude!" said the stranger in a trembling tone, but she replied not.

"Gertrude!" he said again, "unhappy girl, I come to save you!"

"Leave me, false, and cruel lord!" she then answered, "I seek not safety at thy hands!"

"Oh, Gertrude!" exclaimed Lord Leicester, for he it was, who thus visited her dungeon, "refuse not the only aid which can avert the horrible fate to which you have been decreed by the savage Sir George Bowes; they will starve you, Gertrude, if you do not discover what alas, it is impossible that you should know, the retreat where Leonard Dacre lies concealed!"

“ And who may I thank for such a fate? who but the barbarous Earl of Leicester; had I not been safe with Dacre, but for thee, but for thy forcible entrance to his castle, with the recreants who had fled from the battle field? Oh, my dear lord, generous, noble Dacre, oh that I could indeed tell how it fares with thee! alas! alas! art thou yet in life, whom I beheld struck down by the villain hand of a base slave?”

“ By all that is sacred!” said the Earl, “ my heart bleeds for you, Gertrude, oh, reject not the proffered safety; I have, by an enormous bribe, secured to you an opportunity of escape; you do not know how hard a thing it is to die!”

“ What hast thou to do with sacred things?” rejoined Gertrude in a tone of scorn, “ or what dost thou know of how the innocent can meet death?”

“ Oh, Gertrude!” answered the Earl, “ all this I can bear from you now; yet am I not the cause of your condition; no, no, upbraid

for that, thy friend, the virtuous, the upright Morden, who to tear thee from me, delivered thee to the dogged blockhead Hunsdon, whose zeal for the service of his tiger-hearted cousin, consigned thee to Sir George Bowes, and to the castle of Carlisle!"

"I do thank the noble Morden, that he did so save me from thy hands," said Gertrude, "oh, what is death to the infamy of thy love! Leave me, Earl of Leicester, for the sound even of thy voice is pollution!"

"Nay, damsel!" said the Earl, "what if I bear thee hence, what if I force thee to be safe?"

"Ah, proud lord!" answered Gertrude, "I can defy thy power here; I flee with thee a willing prisoner, or thou must perforce leave me to my fate; approach but a step nigher, lay but a finger upon me, and my voice shall arouse my fellow captives, and force the keepers of this prison to the discharge of their duty!"

As the girl spoke, she started from her miserable couch; and the clanking of the chain

which encircled her slender waist, drew tears even from the eyes of Leicester. He threw himself on his knees, he swore, that would she but trust to him, he would place her in safety, and never more molest her with his love.

“And who shall believe thee, false lord?” said Gertrude. “Who shall give credit to the oaths of Leicester? Begone, thou wouldst cheat me to destruction now, because instead of a few bewildered vassals, unknowing whether to fight, or fly, I am surrounded by the fierce agents of Elizabeth’s power! But wert thou free, with thine own slaves about thee, less of courtesy would grace thy speech. Coward, thou didst not dare lift thine own hand against my lord!”

Leicester rose, and replied in a tone of bitter indignation, “Miserable maiden, I leave thee to thy fate; a few days only will pass, ere thou art condemned to the horrors of starvation!”

“No horrors can equal those which I endure

in thy presence," said Gertrude, "leave me, murderer of my miserable aunt; midnight assassin, trouble me no more!"

"That wretched woman, whom I indeed found dead in the house from which thou wast taken by the hated Dacre, merited not thy pity, Gertrude: for all her wish was to see humbled in thee the pride of her brother!"

"'Tis meet that Dacre should have thy hate!" said Gertrude, "and name not thou the sins of Euphrasia, in union with thine own; for lo, though black as the raven, they shall become in comparison more white than snow! oh, man, if thou wouldst show me any mercy, now leave me to myself!"

"Gertrude!" said the earl, again relenting, "sweetest, have mercy on thyself! Oh think, should the brutal Bowes retract, should he spare thee for awhile, bethink thee thou art yet in the power of Elizabeth! Oh you know not the invention of her malice: she who inflicts all cruelty and injustice, because she is secure from punishment!"

"Oh fool!" answered Gertrude, "and does she think herself secure? The time shall be for her, proud lord, and do thou beware of it thyself; that time when the world, for which all has been risked, shall melt like the mists of the morning, when the toys for which the soul has been bartered, shall be snatched from their possessor's grasp. Let Elizabeth find a spell for immortality, and then only think herself secure! But death, which she dismisses from her thoughts, shall indeed come upon her, like a thief in the silent night!"

Once more did Lord Leicester turn ere he quitted the dungeon.

"Gertrude," he said in a subdued voice, "let me not part with thy curse upon my head, forgive me, unhappy girl, for my share in thy wretched fate!"

"Alas!" replied Gertrude, "what avails my forgiveness, rather bend to thy God, and ask his pardon for the many evils thou hast wrought; yet if mine can avail thee, believe that it is bestowed. Well do I know

that my dwelling is in the shadow of death, and in peace would I part even from thee!"

"Is there no question you would ask of me, Gertrude; no message which I can convey?"

"Yes, my blessing to my cousin, to my gentle Lucy, should she cross thy path: and oh tell me truly how it fares with the royal Mary?"

"The shadow of death, Gertrude, darkens on her brow as on thine own!"

"Alas," she is murdered!" said Gertrude.

"It were well!" retorted the earl, "if she had died before, ere so many of the young and fair were implicated in her doom. Gertrude, farewell! If I stay longer I shall destroy myself, by compelling thee to fly!"

With these words, Lord Leicester took the lamp, and once more was Gertrude left to the solitude and darkness of her dungeon.

Having thus failed in all his designs upon the maiden's liberty, the military enthusiasm of the Earl of Leicester speedily departed,

and he became suddenly anxious to appease the Queen, whose anger he well knew would be excited by his having, without her knowledge, presumed to journey into the north. From the dungeon then of Gertrude, he proceeded to a magnificent chamber in the Castle of Carlisle, blazing with tapers, and a cheerful fire, a contrast to the cell of the poor captive whom he had left. Here were seated Lord Hunsdon, and Sir George Bowes, with Lord Scrope, the governor of the castle, and the warden of the marches. Lord Morden too was there, and some warmth of dispute was evident at the moment the Earl of Leicester entered. He quickly discovered its cause, Lord Morden had prayed that the maiden might be spared, while he hastened to London, to solicit for her the pardon of the Queen, whom he contended would be but ill pleased, if her officers, without her especial warrant, sacrificed the life of a person who had once saved her own.

Sir George Bowes, on the other hand, the

natural brutality of whose temper had been aggravated by the disgrace which he had sustained at Barnard Castle, was vehement that she should be immediately put to death; or at least that the instructions which he had received from Cecil should be enforced with regard to this maiden: and that she should be compelled, by lack of food, to yield up the names of such persons as she knew to have been concerned in the rebellion.

Lord Hunsdon, whose unpolished manners, were accompanied by a heart too kind and honest, for the court of Elizabeth, was equally warm in the opinion of Lord Morden: and Lord Scrope, though his feelings inclined him against the measure proposed by Sir George, yet hesitated to take part with Lord Hunsdon, remembering how Elizabeth had lately reproached Sussex with slackness in her service; and that she had even written to him a letter full of reproaches, because immediately on the retreat of the two earls, he had not exercised with greater rigor, the barbarities of

martial law. Her Grace had indeed no great reason to make these complaints to her lieutenant, who had, to a common apprehension, exercised his authority without any of that weak mercy which so much offended her. Both before, and after the attempt of Lord Dacre, all who had fallen into the hands, either of Sussex or of Bowes, had been treated with an unexampled barbarity. The gibbet had indeed been erected on almost every rood of land: in the County of Durham alone, more than three hundred individuals suffered death, nor was there between Newcastle and Wetherby, a district of more than sixty miles in length, and forty in breadth, a town or village, in which some of the inhabitants did not expire on the gallows. It was the horrible advice of Burleigh, that a few inhabitants of each township should be apprehended, and compelled, by imprisonment and want of food, to discover the names of such neighbours as had joined the rebels. Of his intended victims, Sussex wrote to Cecil. "The number whereof is yet un-

certain, for that I know not the number of the townes, but I gesse, that it will not be under six or seven hundred at the least, that shal be exequed of the comon sorte, besides the prisoners taken in the felde."

While these cruelties were exercised upon the meaner prisoners, those of a superior rank were reserved for forfeiture and attainder, and their property was bestowed upon the parasites of the Queen. Pilkington, the Bishop of Durham, writing to solicit grace from Elizabeth, for the unfortunate inhabitants of his diocese, observes. "The number of offenders is so grete, that fewe innocent shall be lefte to trie the guiltie; and if the forfeited lands be bestowed on such as be strangers, and will not dwell in the cuntre, the people shall be withoute heads, the cuntre desert, and noe number of freeholders to doe justice by juries, or serve in the wars!"

In the exercise of these cruelties, Sir George Bowes was especially conspicuous, on one occa-

sion, when sentencing a man named Harrison, to be hanged in his own orchard, he brutally observed, that the best fruit which a tree could bear, was a dead traitor; to the mercy of this man it was, that the innocent Gertrude was chiefly committed.

Meanwhile Lord Morden pleaded with a kind of frantic eloquence, that she might be spared while he journeyed to London; too keenly did he feel as Lord Leicester had told Gertrude herself, that it was he who had delivered her to Elizabeth's brutal officer. Now even, in the agony of his fears for her life, Lord Morden was inclined to condemn the measure he had taken, though the only one which would have sufficed to rescue the maiden from Leicester; nor had he thought on taking the unhappy young prisoner from the Earl, that Lord Hunsdon would have placed her in the power of Sir George.

It is due however, to the warm heart of that nobleman, to declare that he had not done so, could he have conceived that Sir George

would have desired to put in force against a youthful, and delicate female, the most severe rigor of the law. Had it not been better, thought Lord Morden, even to have suffered her to remain in the power of Leicester, some fortunate accident might have rescued her from him, but nought save Elizabeth's own voice might avail to preserve her now.

Lord Leicester finding what was the subject of discussion, threw the weight of his influence into the scale against Sir George Bowes, declaring it as his opinion that the anger of the Queen, would probably be great, should any one presume to take, without her orders, the life of the maiden. Lord Scrope eagerly availed himself of the aid of this new advocate on the side of that compassion to which his own heart leaned, and Sir George was obliged to yield an unwilling assent that Gertrude should be spared until after the return of Lord Morden from London.

The brutality however of his temper broke out in a sarcastic enquiry addressed to the earl.

“ Were it not well that he himself solicited the Queen’s grace on behalf of the fair damsel, it were pity that the good Baron of Hunsdon had removed her from his lordship’s own careful keeping ; though perchance had the gallant earl still maintained the enviable office of her jailor, the Queen might have called him to account for his own loyalty, as well as that of the maiden !”

“ Assuredly, Sir George !” said Lord Hunsdon, sharply, “ had we surmised the savage nature of thy justice, the poor damsel had not been consigned to it by us !”

“ And assuredly !” observed the Earl of Leicester, with a sneer, “ we can keep our loyalty without stain in the estimation of the royal Elizabeth, and yet dispense with the councils of Sir George Bowes !”

Lord Morden, on his part, too happy to have secured even a respite for the unfortunate Gertrude, spoke a short farewell to Lord Scrope and his companions, and left the room, to prepare immediately for his journey to

London. That very hour did the generous young nobleman depart from Carlisle, but scarcely was he clear of the city, when he was overtaken by a party of horsemen, at the head of whom was the Earl of Leicester, hastening, like himself, to London. A few words did he address to the latter, upon the subject of his mission to Elizabeth, and the young man thought he could discover in them something of a better feeling than was common to Leicester; but it had required perhaps, either more or less than a human heart, unmoved to have beheld the ill-fated Gertrude in her dungeon.

“ Lord Morden,” he said in a low tone, as they rode side by side towards London, “ I were sunk in your mind to a measure of obloquy, which I could but ill brook, did I leave you to imagine that I am indifferent to the fate of that unfortunate maiden. Bitterly do I feel that I am its cause. It matters not with you that I should gloss my actions with a thin varnish of hypocrisy, I know myself, young

lord, a man I am, purchasing life's pleasures, and banqueting where'er it falls, the bitterness of my hate, at a price which thy sensitive spirit may perhaps call too dear. But I were other than man, more black even than a fiend, if I did not curse the evil chance which forbids me now to rescue the beautiful Gertrude! Alas, alas, for me to interfere in her favor with Elizabeth, would be but to sign her death warrant with mine own hand! I may not be so happy as to save her. But you, more fortunate, may venture to plead for, without destroying her. Oh, neglect not any argument of eloquence, solicit Cecil in her behalf, for Cecil loves thee, and remind Elizabeth too, of how that maiden saved her own life, jealous; cruel, as she is, there are yet times when her heart softens to more humane feelings!"

"Oh, my lord!" said Lord Morden, "if thus you can mourn the destiny to which your own designs have so much contributed to condemn that helpless maiden, how could your soul have harboured such designs; how might

you even have cursed yourself in their success?"

Leicester laughed bitterly. "Oh!" he said, "I am not indeed one of the romantic fools of virtue, stinting in terror of a future world, the measure of my happiness in this! Had fate willed the fair Gertrude to be mine, I could even have committed, unmolested by conscience, that evil towards her, which proved so much contentment to myself. Yet I wish not in order to avenge mine own disappointment, that the fair damsel should famish in a dungeon, albeit she lavished on me such discourteous terms, as might well excuse such a retributive malice! Then good betide your journey to London, gallant lord, I have told thee in such sincerity as I vouchsafe but to few, how mine own heart is affected towards the beautiful Gertrude; I shall reach the city with yourself, and it may be I shall have the earlier audience of the Queen; but not a word shall I then say of the fair Gertrude, for soft words in

her behalf on my lip, would but breed hard thoughts in the heart of Elizabeth; to you then do I commit the damsel's cause, and heaven prosper it under your care! I do believe, Lord Morden, you would work good in this case even for the reward of your heart's own applauding thoughts, yet whether you win or lose, in seeking the Queen's favor for the poor damsel, believe at least, if ever any other suit of your's be difficult to obtain, it will find a warm advocate in Leicester!"

"You have reason, my lord!" answered Lord Morden, "when you think I should feel myself enough rewarded by saving the fair Gertrude, that reward were indeed a jewel beyond price!"

Here the conversation respecting Gertrude dropped; the two noblemen were both journeying towards London, and each had resolved to travel night and day; but, in spite of that explanatory conversation, even the insolent assurance of Lord Leicester, could not enable him to support the company of the young Morden,

by whom he well knew, that he must in secret, be both hated, and despised.

Such is the sublime influence of virtue, that the contempt even, of Gertrude, had touched Lord Leicester's soul ; he felt for the first time in the course of his profligate career, that he had met with a creature too pure and holy to be his prey, and while his heart smarted with such a severe sense of shame as it had never before experienced, he could yet have kissed the hand which inflicted on it that keen wound.

Under the influence of these feelings it was that the earl, when they had ridden some six miles together, made an excuse to part company with his companion ; nor did they again encounter in the course of their journey.

It was towards the close of a clear, winter day, that the Earl of Leicester arrived at the town of Barnet, it was his intention to press on towards London that night, as he designed to seek an interview with the Queen immediately on his arrival ; his selfishness was now on the alert,

and he dreaded the use which Cecil, and his other foes in the ministry, might make of his late audacious violation of his sovereign's commands. The inns of those days, as we have before observed, could not supply their guests with the ready and luxurious accommodation of our modern hotels; and when Lord Leicester reached the principal hostel of Barnet, he found its best apartment in the possession of a party but newly arrived there. The casement of this apartment overlooked the court yard of the hostel, and the noise of the trampling horses of his retinue, drew some of the persons occupying the room, to the casement. At that moment it happened that the earl, who had sent some of his attendants forward to inquire what accommodation he might expect, himself rode into the court yard, and glancing towards the casement, he immediately recognised one of the faces that were curiously looking through it. There were two persons, one, a young and beautiful female, the other a grotesque looking old man. On

perceiving them, Leicester, walking his horse to the door of the hostel, immediately dismounted, and on the appearance of the host, demanded to be led at once to the room occupied by the persons whom he had observed at the casement.

They, who on their part had also recognised the earl, had quickly drawn back in consternation, his company being the very last into which they were desirous at that moment to fall. While with their companions, two in number, they conversed of this inopportune occurrence, the door opened, and the earl himself, appeared. Lucy Fenton, for she was the young female whom Leicester had observed at the casement, shrunk back on his appearance, and involuntarily clasped the hand of Henry Willoughton, who stood beside her; a pale, thin old man there was too, whose eye glanced anxiously at his beautiful daughter, when she whispered to him the name of the Earl of Leicester; while Master Williams, for he was the companion of our

party, started to his feet in an absolute consternation of awe, at find himself immediately in the presence of a person, so redoubtable both for his rank, and his evil doings, as the Earl of Leicester.

With regard indeed to the last named claim to consideration, Master Williams was of opinion that not the sovereign of the infernal regions himself, possessed it in a more eminent degree than the earl ; such being the state of his feelings, it may be imagined with what kind of trepidation he now stood trembling, and gaping at Leicester. The latter however, noticed him not, but perceiving the averted eyes and timid air of Lucy, he said with some slight bitterness of satire in his looks and tones—

“ Fear me not, young damsel, very beautiful you may be, but no object are you of my pursuit, I do but intrude upon, to convey to you a word from your cousin, the fair Gertrude Harding !”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Lucy, springing forwards

with clasped hands, " what betides my cousin, my dear Gertrude, oh noble earl, delay me not in the telling, be thy news for evil or for good ?"

A shade of grief crossed the countenance of Leicester. " Oh, maiden," he replied, " the life of thy cousin lies at the mercy of the Queen, and the sword of justice is suspended over her head by a single hair !"

" Oh, but the Queen can be merciful," exclaimed Lucy, " for she has freed my old father from prison, and she has given me leave to journey to the North !"

" May heaven grant, young maid," said Leicester, " that the mercy of her Grace, may extend to Gertrude Harding !"

" Oh, I will myself fly to solicit pardon for my cousin !" answered Lucy, " the Queen shuts not her ears to the petitions of the meanest among her subjects ; she will not condemn the innocent, and alas, what offence has my poor Gertrude wrought ?"

"It needs not, maiden, that thou should solicit the Queen; the young Lord Morden, whose favor is great both with Cecil and Elizabeth, hastens to beseech her in behalf of thy cousin: better will it be for thee to journey on to Carlisle; and bear thou this ring to the Lord Scrope, and perchance, when he hears that it was given to thee by the Earl of Leicester, he may vouchsafe thee an interview with thine ill-fated cousin!"

But again Lucy demanded wherefore her cousin had been seized, and then it was that the Earl, concealing how he had himself been the cause of her capture, stated that the maiden had been in association with the rebels, and had fallen into the hands of the Queen's forces; that Leonard Dacre had escaped, and that Sir George Bowes, was impressed with a belief that the damsel could discover the names of many gentlemen who had been concerned in the rebellion. In fear too that Elizabeth might prove inexorable, or Lord Scrope refuse to Lucy an interview with her cousin, the Earl

now told her, that he was the bearer to her, of the last blessing of that unfortunate girl.

"And my poor uncle, knew you aught of him, my lord?" enquired Lucy through her tears.

"Alas, maiden!" replied Leicester, "I did indeed hear Gertrude, when first she stood a captive before the brutal Bowes, thank heaven that her father was no more!"

"Alas, my poor brother!" said Richard Fenton, "well it is indeed, that thou dost not live to mourn over the evil destiny of thy beautiful and innocent child!"

"Maiden!" said the Earl, as he turned to leave the room, "I have no more to say, the best service thou canst render to thy cousin is to hasten as I commend thee to Carlisle; he who goes to sue the Queen in her behalf, will not delay, for he loves the noble Gertrude; who indeed," continued Leicester passionately, "could know that glorious creature, and love her not? Farewell, maiden, be not too sanguine in thine hope, for I am free to own that

thy cousin seemeth a being too exalted, to be long a dweller in this petty world !”

With these words the Earl made a courtly obeisance to Lucy, and left the apartment: she looked at the diamond ring which he had given her to present to Lord Scrope; and then turning to her lover and father, she implored that they would proceed on their journey without more delay. To account for the presence of Lucy and her companions at the inn at Barnet, it is necessary to revert to that day, on which her father and uncle were examined at Whitehall. It may be remembered that on perceiving them she fell senseless into Henry’s arms, who alarmed, and dreading a recognition of himself, which would deprive the poor girl of her only protector, hastened to bear her immediately to the secure retreat beneath his ruined dwelling at Charing. Thither he was accompanied both by Edward Wood, and Master Williams; and thus it was that Willoughton failed to hear what kind of punishment was to be inflicted on the unfortunate Harding.

The terror of beholding her father and uncle, in such a condition, brought on a partial relapse of that fever which had first seized Lucy in the cottage of Cicely Merton ; and for three days, the half distracted Henry had hung over her couch, expecting that she would yet be ravished from him by the hand of death. The kind-hearted Williams kept him company, not returning to his own home till Lucy was again out of danger ; and Edward Wood who learned on his return to the city, the nature of John Harding's sentence, and that it was to be executed that evening, would not add to the measure of Willoughton's distress, by making him acquainted with it when he visited him at Charing on the succeeding day. It was a matter of real grief to the amiable Warden, that his official duties compelled him not only to witness that ill usage to which John Harding was subjected, but utterly precluded the possibility of his rendering him any assistance before he left London ; for this assistance could Edward Wood have obtained an opportu-

nity of speaking with the unhappy merchant, he would not have hesitated to offer on account of the Queen's prohibition.

Meanwhile, Babington, Tichborne, and their associates were brought to trial, Giffard the infamous spy, had escaped to Paris, where he died in prison about three years afterwards. As had been expected, Babington and his friends were found guilty, nor does it need here to detail how the cunning of Walsingham, had managed to implicate the Queen of Scots in their guilt.

The condemnation of the prisoners was immediately followed by their execution; and the manner of that execution, was such on the first day, as to revolt the public feeling even of that age; and the remaining prisoners were suffered to expire, ere they were cut down from the gallows.

It was the morning after this massacre, that Lucy Fenton escaping the careful guardage of her-lover, hastened to Whitehall, and throwing herself at the feet of Elizabeth, as she

issued from the palace gates, to take an airing on horseback, she implored pardon for her father, and uncle. Elizabeth as before observed, loved popularity, and she was sensible that the cruel execution of Babington, and the severe measures adopted in the north, placed her popularity at the moment in some jeopardy. It would be a fine act of grace to liberate the father of this damsel, intimately connected as he was with the Hardings, who had now become so notorious for their attachment to the cause of Queen Mary; and Elizabeth, a keen observer of character, had perceived during that single examination of Richard Fenton, which had taken place in her presence, that he was not one of the bold, and exalted spirits, whose enthusiasm would endanger her own peace; she might therefore seem to be impartial, and yet remain secure. Immediately therefore, did she grant to Lucy the release of her father; Henry Willoughton too, who had not ostensibly been mixed with the northern insurrection, received permission to retire if he


willed it, to his estate near Carlisle; and the grateful Lucy regarding these acts of beneficence, felt assured that the cruelties exercised on her uncle, and on Babington, must have rather resulted from the advice of her ministers, than the dictates of Elizabeth's own heart.

In all haste, did Lucy now prepare, with her father and lover, to leave London; for in the North might she not meet her uncle, and cousin, and wean them from a prosecution of those designs which had hitherto proved so ruinous to all engaged in them?

From Henry she had obtained a promise that he would not take arms against Elizabeth; and she knew not how the enthusiasm of her love for Lord Dacre, would alone have linked Gertrude, heart and soul, to him and to his projects: months had now elapsed since she had seen her cousin, and it was not till the night of their separation, that Gertrude had first met the master spirit of her fate.

Before leaving London, Lucy prevailed upon her lover, to accompany her to the cottage of

the Mertons, near Eltham : and in the hope to find them there, she was not deceived. After the execution of Babington, they had been released from prison, and suffered to return to their home : from which, in his company they had been so rudely torn, by the ministers of Elizabeth's authority. A change had now fallen upon poor Cicely, her vivacity was gone, her spirit, if not her heart, was broken by the terrible fate of her idolized foster son. She seemed even insensible to the thanks, and to the caresses of Lucy, and sat gloomily by the fire, during the damsel's stay at her cottage, absorbed evidently in one distressing thought. Her husband, though shocked by the fate of Babington, had regained more of his usual cheerfulness. As for Cicely, she lived five years after the execution of Babington ; and Lucy, though residing chiefly in Cumberland, saw her more than once during that period, but her manners though gradually they seemed less full of grief, never regained their wonted tone ; and her husband said, after



her death, that the execution of Babington, had given to the constitution of Cicely, a blow which it never recovered.

It was but the day before her purposed departure from London, that Lucy had visited these kind people, and the remainder of that day had been spent in preparing for her journey. Lucy, amid her own happiness, and the hopes which she yet encouraged of a better fate for her cousin, was forgetful of none; and she placed the good nurse Mabel, the kind and early attendant, on the childhood of herself and Gertrude, under the care of Master Wood, for Mabel was too infirm to accomplish a journey to the north, during that rigorous season. All these duties of gratitude and charity being fulfilled, Lucy had set out with her father, and lover, for the north; and as far as Barnet, they had been accompanied by Master Williams, for it seemed the good tailor had a sister residing in that town, and this it appeared to him would be a proper opportunity to visit her.

In grief however did they part, after the communication which Lucy had received from Lord Leicester. Of that nobleman's connection, through the unhappy Euphrasia, with the Harding family, Richard Fenton was ignorant ; for the pride of John Harding, had led him to conceal even from his wife, the lost condition of his guilty sister ; and the enmity which on more than one occasion, had been evinced towards him by the earl, he had attributed among his friends, to every cause, rather than that which he knew to be the correct one.

The bleak wind of January, blew bitterly round the hostel at Barnet, as Lucy, with her father and lover, mounted their horses to depart : and the kind Williams wept as he bade them farewell.

" Alas ! Mistress Lucy," he said, " I fear we shall have a snow storm to-night, and then, good lack, good lack, you will be staid on your journey ; and our bonny Gertrude, our fair lily of Grass Street, may perish in a dungeon

without one friend to cheer her, at her side! Alas, alas, is it not enough to kill a fair young damsel, to be shut up in a prison, her father dead, and the cause she so much loved destroyed for ever? Alas, what news is this to take to honest Master Edward Wood, oh she was dear to his heart, alas, alas, for our sweet Gertrude Harding!"

No delay had there been on the part of Lord Morden; night and day had he travelled from Carlisle, scarce staying for refreshment or for rest: he reached London on the same evening as Lord Leicester, who, from a different motive, had journeyed with equal expedition. But it was too late for the advocate of Gertrude, to attempt anything in her cause on the night of his arrival in London, the privileged favorite; Leicester, might alone venture to intrude at such an hour on the Queen. The night was sleepless to Lord Morden; deeply did he love the beautiful Gertrude, and the horror which he had seen her display when in the power of Leicester, whom he met galloping, followed by

his band of lances from Rockliffe Castle, with the maiden in his arms, had driven him upon the desperate expedient of claiming the interference of Lord Hunsdon, who coming up at that moment with a portion of his forces, insisted that the earl should deliver his prisoner to him, in his quality of commander-in-chief. Leicester, who at first opposed, at length yielded to this demand, and the results are already known. In the solitude too, of that bitter and seemingly endless night, often did a thought of the noble and unfortunate Leonard Dacre, cross the mind of Lord Morden : Gertrude loved him, that he had learned ; that, with a kind of noble pride, she had avowed, when pressed to make known his associates, or his possible retreat.

“ Oh, most blest, and most miserable of lovers !” groaned the generous Morden, “ most worthy of, most happy in each other, most exquisitely wretched in the chance which has parted you forever ! Alas, sweet Gertrude, how fares it with thy lover now, lies he con-

cealed in some obscure retreat, frantic with the thought of thee ; or has the life stream curdled round his noble heart, and does the arm which would defend thee, now stiffen to the touch of death ?”

At an early hour in the morning, was Lord Morden prepared to visit the Queen : but he was disappointed in the hope which he had entertained of first obtaining an interview with Burleigh, as he found on enquiry at the abode of that nobleman, that he was already in attendance on Elizabeth. The young man’s humble request for an audience, was immediately complied with, and in the royal presence he found not only the lord treasurer, but also the Earl of Leicester. There was a grave and somewhat vexed look on the countenance of Burleigh, and a kind of triumph in the aspect of his rival : which told that the blind dotage of the Queen, had enabled him, as he had boasted it would, to make his cause good with her.

Elizabeth had already received the official despatches of Lord Hunsdon, detailing the discomfiture of Leonard Dacre, and her manner towards Morden, was gracious, and even kind.

“What will you, our faithful servant?” she said, as she extended her hand for him to kiss, “how comes it that my Lord of Hunsdon made not you the bearer of his despatches?”

“Alas gracious sovereign,” said Lord Morden, “it is upon an errand of mercy that my good Lord Hunsdon, has spared me from my post, to kneel at the feet of your Grace!”

“An errand of mercy!” said Elizabeth, “right glad are we to hear the name of mercy, on the lip of a true subject! Alas, we may be weak, foolish even in our compassion, as my Lord of Burleigh told us even now; but oh that we could infuse into the spirits of the most faithful among our servants, some touch of compassion which might make them bear with our own weakness! Alas! alas! shall we destroy our own royal sister, the unhappy Mary?”

Albeit, she did plot against our life, shall we return evil for evil?"

"Thus is it with your Grace!" said Cecil, "duty towards your subjects, is sacrificed to a false principle of mercy; I had hoped that the petition of your loyal servants of the commons, might have moved you to the rendering of justice to the Queen of Scots. It were well if the pious suggestion of Sir James Croft were acted upon, and that we daily implored heaven to move the heart of your Grace, to the rendering of justice!"

"It were well indeed!" remarked Leicester, "Sir James is a godly man, replete with the unction of the spirit!"

"Nay, we doubt it not!" cried Elizabeth, "but oh, my lords, ye put our womanly feelings too suddenly upon too hard a task; we will commend ourselves, that we be in this matter of our unhappy cousin, directed by the spirit; and in the mean time let us even solace our poor heart, if it may be, by yielding pardon to some delinquent at the request of our good

servant of Morden; speak our faithful lord, for whom seek ye mercy at our hands?"

"For the damsel of Grass Street, madam! for the unhappy Gertrude Harding!" said Lord Morden, who had risen not from his knee during the foregoing conversation.

At that name Elizabeth started, and her lip became for a moment very pale, while her eye fell with a lynx like keenness upon the face of Lord Leicester; that perfect master of dissimulation, however quailed not under the glance; the color of the Queen returned, she remained for some minutes apparently lost in thought, then she said:

"Thy request is a bold one, young lord, for flagrant have been the treasons of that damsel; but we forget not that there is in her some touches of a noble spirit, we forget not that service which she rendered to ourselves, and which we may even the more esteem, that the foolish maiden was discontented with our rule. We would fain believe that her folly has had

its lesson, and that she will disdain to be disloyal, when we have spared her forfeit life; you shall have an order under our own hand, young man, for the damsel's release; but tell her to sin against her Queen no more; for by heaven's truth we will not pardon her again!"

"Most gracious, and beneficent of sovereigns," said Lord Morden, kissing in a kind of rapture, the again extended hand of Elizabeth; "I stake my soul on Gertrude's future truth!"

But here Lord Burleigh broke in with a stronger expression of discontent than he in general manifested, towards any measure of his mistress, upon which she seemed to be resolved.

"Does your Grace mean to spare that ungrateful maiden? she, who is believed to have screened the two false Earls from your royal wrath, by a timely warning that their treason was discovered! She, who is known to have been in company with Leonard Dacre himself,

the most audacious of traitors! Your Grace would not spare this damsel, it cannot be?"

"Yet it is!" said Elizabeth sharply, "and we would commend our good Lord Treasurer, to forbear such severe comments upon a point where we are resolved!"

That evening a warrant for the unconditional release of Gertrude Harding, was delivered to Lord Morden, and that evening did he set out on his return to Carlisle, transported by his unexpected success.

He was not however able to accomplish his journey with all the celerity that he wished; for as Master Williams had prognosticated, on the preceding evening there had been a fall of snow, which though in London so slight as scarcely to have excited Lord Morden's attention, had made the country roads difficult, and in some places dangerous.

This snow storm had also delayed Lucy Fenton and her companions, and the more expeditious travelling of Lord Morden threw

him into their company before they reached Carlisle. His name meeting the ears of Lucy from one of his attendants in a hostel, where the young nobleman had stopped for refreshment; she immediately made herself known to him, and in company with her, her lover, and her father, did Lord Morden perform the remainder of his journey.

Oh with what a palpitating heart did Lucy proceed with Lord Morden and Willoughton to the Castle of Carlisle, immediately on their arrival in that city. It was about mid-day, a wintry day with not a ray of sunshine to brighten the landscape, half veiled as it was, by a covering of snow.

Lord Morden and his friends were immediately admitted to the presence of Lord Scrope, who received them courteously, and regretted that it was his office to dispense the rigors of the law. Lucy entreated permission to visit Gertrude in her prison, but her heart sunk, and she leaned heavily on the arm of her

lover as they traversed the stone passages, and the dreary vaults.

Once Lord Morden, who preceded them, turned, and pointing with an agonized countenance to the moisture which hung upon the walls, he exclaimed —

“ Has she borne this ? ”

“ Dear Lucy, be advised,” said Willoughton, “ do not persist in descending to these dismal dungeons, Lord Morden and I will go alone, and soon place our poor Gertrude in your arms ! ”

“ She has borne the damps and the cold of these dwellings night and day,” said Lucy, “ and cannot I bear once to descend to them for her sake ? ”

The key of the dungeon grated harshly in the lock, but there was no sound within, as if the noise at that unusual hour had excited the attention of the captive. The door was thrown open, and the sickly ray of the lamp gleamed upon the stone walls, and the heap of straw, the only bed vouchsafed to the unhappy pri-

soner. A figure was stretched out, with the face concealed upon that miserable couch, a profusion of golden hair was scattered loosely over the black garments.

A piercing shriek broke from the lips of Lucy, as she sprung forwards, and locked that extended figure in her arms, neither her voice, nor touch however aroused the poor sufferer. Had she ceased to suffer? Her head fell helplessly backwards, and her eyes, those sunny hazel eyes, was their sweet light extinguished for ever? Cold, cold as marble, were the beautiful lips which Lucy kissed in all the frenzy of despair, and the hand which was clasped by the not less agonized Lord Morden. But might not that well be: were not their own frames already chilled by the vapors of that dismal cell? Is she dead—quite dead—or does she only swoon?

CHAPTER XIII.

Macbeth.—Both of you

Know Banquo was your enemy.

Murderer.—True, my lord.

Macbeth.—So he is mine, and in such bloody distance,

That every minute of his being thrusts

Against my near'st of life; and though I could,

With barefaced power sweep him from my sight,

And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,

For certain friends, that are both his and mine,—

Whose loves I may not drop; but wail his fall,

Whom I myself struck down: and thence it is,

That I to your assistance do make love,

Masking the business from the common eye,

For sundry weighty reasons.

MACBETH.

It was an old retired chamber, in the Castle of Fotheringay. The walls were hung with tapestry, and the doors close shut: they must

have been loud and angry voices to be heard without those heavy oaken doors : why then did those two old men whisper, and bend over the narrow table which stood between them, as though they feared the very walls had ears ?

There were letters and papers on that table before them, illumined by one pale lamp, but no cheerful fire blazed upon the hearth ; they had withdrawn to that apartment, to hold a conference of deep and deadly import. It might have been the sickly light of the lamp too, which gave their countences that ashen hue.

Those old men were Sir Amias Paulet, and Sir Drue Drury ; they to whose custody was last committed the person of the unfortunate Mary.

“ What think you in truth of this, brother Drury ? ” said Sir Amias, again taking up one of the letters from the table.

“ Oh false, false, and cunning ! ” said Sir Drue, “ see you not that the snare is spread,

alike for body, and for soul: wouldst thou, for any price, poison the Queen of Scots?"

"May the great God be my witness, I would not!" said Sir Amias, in an energetic tone. "No, brother, sore as my heart has been, to witness that wretched princess still persevere in the idolatries of Rome, yet would I not unlawfully abridge the measure of her life. God forbid, God forbid, that I should blot my conscience with blood, and fix the curse of Cain upon my children's heads! My life, and my goods for Queen Elizabeth, and my life and my goods are in her hands, but my conscience is mine own before God, and before God, will I keep my conscience clear!"

"And in heart and soul do I agree with you, my friend!" said Sir Drue Drury, "but see how the sin would recoil on our own heads, were we wrought upon to do this evil deed. Were the royal cousin of our mistress slain,

the Queen of Scots slain by our hands; would not a severe justice call upon Elizabeth, to avenge the blood of Mary, upon their heads by whom it was spilt, must not the Queen of England take cognizance of, and punish a treachery so foul? Brother! brother!" continued Sir Drue, lowering his voice to a whisper, while his face grew yet paler, and his eyes full of horror were fixed upon those of his companion, "a treachery, foul treachery to us, lurks here! She who is most guilty in thought, and in deed, would remain at our cost, for ever guiltless in repute! Elizabeth would have us in secret murder the Queen of Scots, but in public would she condemn us for that murder!"

"Good lack! good lack!" said Sir Amias, "can woman's heart be the biding place of such a black deceit; see here, my friend, how in a letter of a date but briefly before this of the secretary, she calleth me 'her dear, and faithful Paulet,' and promises me, rewards without an end!"

"Aye, and we see now, brother, how thou wast to purchase those rewards!" said Sir Drue, "but I tell thee, Paulet, wert thou the man to dip thy hand in Mary's blood, the reward of Elizabeth, would be to hang thee like a dog!"

"So indeed do I believe!" answered Sir Amias, "and see but here my good brother, mark the cunning of deceit that is in this letter of the secretary; we may not doubt, say they, of Mary's guilt after her trial, if her trial have condemned the Queen of Scots, in the name of that trial let her suffer; it were even to do our mistress herself a foul wrong, to shed the blood of her captive without law, or warrant, assuredly would the world think that she suffered in secret, because in truth she merited not to suffer at all. Oh, may the Lord enlighten the wicked hearts of men! if these are the designs of those whom he sets in the high places, and whose souls he hath graced with a knowledge of the truth, may we not indeed pity the fail-

ings of that poor Princess whose spirit is yet darkened by the delusions of Papistry?"

"We may so, indeed!" answered Drury, "and night and day implore the Lord to enlighten that darkness! But see thou, good Paulet," he added, returning to the subject of the letter, "it behoves us at once to answer this missive!"

"I shall do so!" replied Paulet, "and state in all truth, and honesty, why, or once, I disobey the commands of her Grace, but verily the injunctions of God are high, even above our duty to princes!"

"And say thou, my brother," exclaimed Sir Drue, "that in heart, even is my opinion like thine own!"

* * * * *

It was a few days after this conversation at Fotheringay, that Queen Elizabeth sat alone in her closet at Whitehall. Her eyes were fixed upon the blazing fire, but it would have been difficult to define the varying expression of her countenance. The door opened, and her newly

appointed secretary, Davison, stood before her. The Queen looked up hastily.

"Oh, Davison, 'tis well," she exclaimed, "what hast thou done with that commission for the execution of the unhappy Queen of Scots, which we signed a few days since?"

"Gracious madam!" answered the secretary, "the great seal is already appended to that commission!"

"Already!" said Elizabeth with an air of surprise. "Nay, thou needest not have made such haste!"

"May it please your Grace!" answered Davison, "it was not for me, on a matter of such import, to dally with your majesty's commands!"

"Well, well!" replied Elizabeth, "it matters not, but—" and as she spoke, an ambiguous smile parted her lips, "Davison, our good Davison, we had a dream last night; we dreamed that our heart smote us that our cousin was no more, and that we punished thee as the cause of her death!"

"Royal lady!" exclaimed Davison, starting, while his face grew pale at the danger which he surmised, "if your resolution have changed, will you not say so, do you yet design the execution of that commission against the Queen of Scots?"

"Yes!" said Elizabeth in a voice of thunder, "Yes, by G——, but we like not the form of that rascally commission, of which ye are all so fond, for behold it imposes all the responsibility upon our neck! We stand forth as our kinswoman's sole destroyer!"

"It is yet for your Majesty to recall that commission!" answered Davison, "if such a measure seem fitting to your royal will!"

To this remark the Queen did not reply, but enquired "had no answer come from Paulet and Drury, with regard to the service which she had required at their hands."

"Gracious madam!" said Davison, "they profess themselves true servants of your Majesty; their lives, and their fortunes do they tender at your feet, but they protest that

for conscience sake, they cannot shed without a warrant, the blood of the Scottish Queen!"

Elizabeth started from her seat, and broke into a volley of oaths. "And that villain Paulet too," she said, "that nice judging knave, who stands forsooth upon his conscience! his squeamish conscience can even gulp it seems, the breaking of his oath to us, his rightful mistress! is not his name set to the bond of association, entered into by those who willed to defend us, from the bloody designs of our cruel and ungrateful cousin? Yes, yes, but that oath can be broken, by this conscience keeping rogue, this precise and dainty fellow, when forsooth he wants to dip our royal hand in blood; to make us seem a vengeful murderess! And his companion knave, the scoundrel Drury too, we will keep them both in our good memory for this! We will warrant them a reward for their disloyal refusal, and we may yet find a faithful servant, not troubled with

such delicate conscience, and such craven fears !”

Davison trembled at this storm of rage, but he ventured to interpose a word in favor of Paulet and Drury.

“ Consider,” he said, “ most royal lady, the death of the Queen of Scots could not have been passed unnoticed by you, her death, accomplished without a warrant, must have been by you avowed, or by you avenged: ill would it have suited your maiden, and royal dignity, to have avowed such an act your own, and as ill could it have become your justice and compassion, to ruin your faithful servants because they obeyed your will !”

“ Begone, villain !” cried Elizabeth, “ for I see thou art like the rest !”

Davison immediately withdrew, but alarmed by the conduct of the Queen, he made it known to the lords of the Council, who promising to screen him from blame, took upon themselves to dispatch that commission which Elizabeth

had already signed. How these lords abided by their promise, and how the unfortunate Davison was treated by the Queen after the death of Mary, the page of history will show.

But it is even here worthy of remark, that on the very morning of the Scottish Queen's execution, Elizabeth expressed to Davison, her surprise that the warrant had not yet been executed.

CHAPTER XIV.


See, the whyte moone shynes on hie,
Whyter is my true love's shroude ;
Whyter than the mornynge skie,
Whyter than the evenynge cloude.

CHATTERTON.

THE day was cheerless, a heavy wintry day ; the snow which had fallen in the night and in the earlier part of the morning, still lay in ridges, upon the larger branches of the trees, and hung about the small twigs, undisturbed either by a breath of wind, or the symptoms of a thaw, while the level ground, and rocky precipice, were alike wrapped in an uniform covering of white.

The cheerlessness however of the scene without, could add but little to augment the distress which prevailed in the house of Henry Willoughton. In a chamber of that house knelt Lucy Fenton, weeping by the bed of the dying Gertrude, Lord Morden, and Willoughton, and old Richard Fenton were all there, for they knew that the last hour was approaching, and the stainless spirit, indeed about to wing its flight.

Gertrude had only swooned when she was taken from her dungeon, and for some days after her removal to the house of Henry Willoughton, she appeared to revive: it was the last gleam of the lamp, ere its light departed for ever: her late hardships of body and mind, had exhausted the delicate frame of Gertrude, and now the friends who hung over her couch knew that she must die. But the spirit of the unfortunate girl clung to its mortal dwelling. Nothing since the day of the battle had been heard of Leonard Dacre; but Gertrude was impressed with a conviction that she should



see him once again—"And then, love," she whispered to Lucy, "then shall I part in peace!"

The chamber in which she lay, overlooked a wide extent of country, and Gertrude would have her bed so placed, that she could see the far hills through her window, over which she would never suffer the curtains to be drawn, and there she lay watching for hours for her lover's coming. The frenzy of this hope had indeed, her medical attendants said, alone supported the life of the unhappy girl so long. But now nature seemed at last to sink, the eyes, the anxious eyes which had watched so long the dazzling waste of snow, grew dim, and drooped, and from time to time, as the agonized Lord Morden bent over her, he perceived her beautiful features agitated by a slight convulsion. Once however Gertrude looked up, and seeming all herself again, she said to Lucy Fenton—"He will come, love, he will come yet!"

Then as her sweet eyes once more closed, her friends looked mournfully at each other, for they thought that the hope of the dying girl was indeed vain. The shades of the early evening were already beginning to descend over the dismal landscape; and Henry Willoughton, unable to bear any longer the still and horrible watches of the death chamber, had stolen from it, into the gallery from which it opened. This was a long gallery, and while one end communicated with the grand staircase, at the other, a narrower flight of steps led to one of the garden entrances. As Henry slowly paced this gallery, he perceived the figures of two men, cautiously advancing from the garden. He hurried towards them, but ere he could speak, the foremost of the two grasped his hand, and in his voice, though suffocated by grief, he recognised the tones of Leonard Deere.

“Let me see her whom I have slain, let me look upon the face of Gertrude Harding!”

“ Oh, Dacre, I had feared that you were no more !” said Willoughton.

“ Would that I had been indeed no more !” replied Leonard, “ oh, would that I had died ere she had known me, ere she had been mingled with my fatal, fatal schemes !”

Lord Dacre stood in the chamber of death, and what was the sorrow of those who were there assembled, to the majesty of grief that was written upon his brow ?

A terrible torpor had seemed for the last hour to have seized upon Gertrude Harding ; but the first murmured accent of his voice, the first burst of his anguish, appeared to stay her spirit in its upward flight. With a strength almost supernatural, she started up, and threw her arms about his neck, exclaiming with a shriek of joy, “ You have come, mine own love ! I knew that you would come !”

Lord Dacre clasped her to his heart, he kissed her cold white lips, but the light of life had vanished even in that moment from the

hazel eyes, and the spirit in its brief rapture had departed.

* * * * *

Who shall describe the grief of Leonard Dacre? that grief too great for utterance, which was henceforth to be his soul's companion through the weary pilgrimage of a blighted existence. Forever, were those last mortal accents of the being who had so loved him, that the spell even of her love, had confined the gentle soul for a time to its tenement of clay, forever were those accents, those impassioned accents of her matchless love, to ring in his ears. And that face so sweet in its pale beauty; with a smile lingering on the wan lip, will it not be forever present to his mentaleye? Tenderly, cautiously, as though he feared to disturb her in a pleasant sleep, did Lord Dacre loose the form of Gertrude from his clasp. There was a sublimity of despair in his silence, which none present dared to break upon with speech.

Then it was they perceived, as he bent like one entranced over the body of Gertrude, that

sickness, as well as sorrow had been his companion, and that on his brow was a scarcely cicatrized wound. Once more did he press those icy hands to his heart, to his lips; then breaking through the friends, who would have detained him, he rushed from the house: and in a few minutes they beheld him riding with his head bare, and with the speed of one distracted, towards those snow covered hills, on which Gertrude had gazed so anxiously all day. He was followed by another horseman, the faithful Norbert, who had never left his lord from the time that he had been struck down by the robber Miles.

By that attached retainer, Lucy and Willoughton afterwards discovered that Lord Dacre had been conveyed insensible, to the retreat of the poor monks at Lanercost, there his wounds had been dressed, and there he had been concealed till the day of Gertrude's death; when Norbert, whom he had sent to procure intelligence of her fate at Carlisle, had brought him word that she had been removed, it was

thought, in a dying state, to the house of Willoughton. No entreaties of the good monks, no fear of danger to himself, no weakness from his scarce healed wounds, could now detain him at the abbey. Norbert would not suffer him to depart alone: and throughout that miserable night, when Lord Dacre rushed, half frantic, from the house of his friend; throughout that night did his true vassal track his course, till the moment when the mind outwore the body's endurance, and he sunk from his horse, overcome with wretchedness and fatigue.

Lucy Fenton, and her lover, never saw Lord Dacre more: long afterwards they heard that he was living an exile in Flanders, but his retreat, said those who gave the information, was profound, the greatness of his mind seemed wrecked, and the court, and the camp, were alike shunned by the once gallant and ambitious Leonard Dacre. Most anxious, nevertheless, again to behold that beloved

friend, Henry Willoughton undertook a journey to Flanders, for the express purpose of finding his retreat: but he was studiously avoided by Lord Dacre, who seemed to fly before his friend, and all that Henry could learn in addition to the knowledge which he already possessed was, that the unfortunate nobleman was constantly attended by Norbert. The next that Henry heard of Leonard Dacre, was, that he had died in his exile.

On the night, however, after the ill-fated Gertrude was consigned to her timeless grave, Lord Morden stole from the house of Willoughton, to vent upon that grave the anguish of his heart. It was an old village churchyard, in which rested all that now remained of the beautiful and high-souled Gertrude: the plain, solemn looking edifice had been built in Saxon times, and many an aged yew tree kept watch over the slumbers of the dead. It was a clear night, the moon was up, and touched with her cold lustre, the grey church tower, the dark yew trees, and the glittering surface

of the snow. The church-yard hung upon the side of a hill, and as Lord Morden approached it, he heard the tread of horses, and perceived a man riding leisurely along a path, and holding by the rein another horse than that which he rode. The young nobleman entered the church-yard, but as he approached the grave of Gertrude, he perceived that the watch was already kept: a bitter groan startled the silence of the night, and it needed not the moonbeam, which broke at that moment over the noble countenance of the mourner, to make that mourner known to Lord Morden. He turned hastily away, for what was his grief, who had loved Gertrude; to that of him, who had been himself the beloved of the ill-fated maiden?

CHAPTER XV.

* * * The soul!
How wishfull she looks,
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
Oh, might she stay to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage! Mournful sight,
Her very eyes weep blood, ev'ry groan
She heaves is big with horror. But the foe,
Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on,
Till forced at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin.

BLAIR.

YEARS, long years had rolled away, and many
a spring had the sweet wild flowers, bloomed
and faded, upon the grave of Gertrude Hard-
ing: and what meanwhile had become of those

the great, and triumphant ones, whose wickedness, and whose success had stretched her in that early grave: and those for whose cause she had suffered, and had dared so much, how in the ruin of that cause had it fared with them? Alas, the page of history, which tells their fate, may be blotted with many tears.—What became of the long descended Nevil, and of Percy, the noblest of England's peers; let Scotland blush in mentioning the last.

Doubly was the Earl of Northumberland betrayed: on his first arrival in Scotland, he was treacherously given into the hands of Murray, by one of the Armstrongs, in whom he had confided. After two years imprisonment in the Castle of Lochleven, he was sold to Elizabeth, by the execrable Morton, and beheaded without a trial at York.

Well would it be for the honour of Scotland, if this had been the last time that the followers of John Knox had stained her annals, by their Judas-like bartering of blood for gold!

Who knows not that the Earl of Westmoreland, and Lord Dacre died in exile; and Norton, the venerable Norton, he too expired far from the land which his virtues might have graced, in a state, say some accounts, of pure poverty. His daughter-in-law, the gentle Blanche, who had been conveyed into Scotland by the retainers of Lord Dacre, died there of that slow, but sure disease, a broken heart.

■ Such was the fate of the oppressed, and what was that of the oppressor? Murray, the false, ungrateful Murray, out off even amid the enjoyment of his ill-got power, lived long enough, thanks to a supernal justice, after he had been shot by Bothwellhaugh, to know that the power for which he had delivered up his soul, was departing from him. And the miscreant Morton; revenge herself, might be content in remembering his agonies, upon that scaffold, to which he was at last, so deservedly brought.

But there were others among the foes of the hapless Mary, more intimately connected with

our tale, and chief among these were Elizabeth and Leicester.

Leicester, the profligate, the poisoner, the destroyer of the innocent Gertrude, how did he end his days? An impartial justice at length visited the blackest of his crimes upon his own head; and he died the victim of poison, administered it is believed, by the paramour of his wife, that wife to obtain whom, he had poisoned her first husband, the Earl of Essex.

And Elizabeth the great, the mighty, the wise; throned high among the nations, how fared it in the latter day with her? Oh, ye who look only at the splendours of this world, and think not they can by possibility be bought too dear, regard again the regal glories of Whitehall!

There sits Elizabeth as of old, in her stately closet; but where are the faces that were about her, where are the cunning agents of her will? they, who alas, fostered the pride of her heart, and instigated her to evils not her own, one by one they have dropped from the side of their

mistress, they were summoned by a voice more mighty than hers; Leicester, and Burleigh, and Walsingham are dead! The Queen is alone, her face is full of horror, and of grief; what dismal thoughts rush over her powerful mind? A sword is on the table before her, her dress even is neglected, her hair hangs loose about her face; and with a wild look she snatches up the sword, and runs it through the costly tapestry of her closet. But there is no sound, no cry of a traitor concealed behind those hangings; the Queen shakes her head with a melancholy air, and returns to her seat. The beauty too of Elizabeth is departed, she is old, and decrepid.

But now the door of her closet was opened, and ushered by a gentleman of the court, a comely dame of middle age appeared.

These persons approached the Queen, but she was lost in thought, she noticed them not.

“ May it please your Grace!” said the gentleman, “ that lady whom you so much desired

to see, is arrived, Mistress Lucy Willoughton stands before you !”

At these words Elizabeth looked up, her countenance was full of sorrow, she waved her hand for the gentleman to leave the room, then she said.

“ Your face is changed, fair dame, but it mindeth me, it mindeth me yet, of one that was with me in years long gone, and which of late has sore obtruded on my dreams !”

Lucy wept, for a long course of happiness had not erased from her heart, its tender remembrance of her ill fated cousin.

A golden cup stood upon the table, Elizabeth put it to her lips, but she could not swallow the wine which it contained ; and replacing it, she smote her breast, and shed tears ; then she said.

“ Thou knowest, Mistress Willoughton, we did not seek the maiden’s death ; oh, no, it was not by our will she died ! it was not by our will !”

“ Gracious madam, I do know it !” replied Lucy.

“ Oh, it was a brave wench !” said Elizabeth, “ and he is gone too, Leonard Dacre, has been long dead, and Leicester, Burleigh, they are all dead, all dead !”

As she spoke thus, the unhappy Queen fell back in her chair, Lucy summoned assistance, and Elizabeth was conveyed to her chamber. But when there, she would have Mistress Willoughton by her bed-side; she had loved latterly to talk only of vexatious and irritating subjects, the execution of Essex, or the displeasing posture of Irish affairs. Within the last few days a new fancy had seized her, and she would send into Cumberland, where she knew that Mistress Willoughton resided with her family. And now she would speak with her of nothing but the rising in the north, of the Percy, and the Nevil, of Leonard Dacre, and of Gertrude.

The day after Lucy’s arrival at the court, was wet and cold, it was the end of January ;

but the Queen had resolved on that day to be removed to her Palace at Richmond, and thither, though much indisposed, she insisted upon going.

Lucy sat near Elizabeth in the royal barge, and as the hollow wind swept round it, and the rain pattered in the river, she often observed the Queen shake her head with a sorrowful air, as if the melancholy of the day were but too much in unison with the frame of her mind; while ever and anon, a tear stole down her cheek.

Who shall say what were the thoughts of Elizabeth during that dismal journey; she knew that the world was fast passing from before her, and was hers the mind, that could to itself disguise the mischief of its own committing? Was the poverty in which Norton lingered out the poor remnant of his days, was the axe that terminated the sorrows of Mary, so terrible as was to Elizabeth, the dominion of her tyrant thoughts?

On reaching Richmond, she was so ill that

she was compelled to retire to bed, and to dismiss Lucy, whom she had hitherto kept in constant, and fatiguing attendance.

The Queen lay in her bed ; she had ordered her attendants not to draw the curtains over her windows, and she watched the leafless trees waving to and fro before them, and the ruddy flame of her fire, dancing upon the tapestry. Elizabeth had sunk into that partial torpor in which, though the mind has not altogether yielded to the influence of sleep, the memories, the visions that pass over it, have the indistinctness of a dream. A long train of shadows flitted before the mental eye of Elizabeth, there was the fair face of Gertrude Harding, and another face as fair ; the features too of the ill-fated Essex, rose to blight her in her sleep, but ever were those female faces present, even when the others had passed away. Suddenly Elizabeth started up, she was wide awake, but an unutterable horror had seized upon her soul : anything to escape from that bed ; and when her diabolical shriek had sum-

moned her attendants to her apartment, they found her standing in her night dress on the floor, her hands clenched, her eyes fixed as in a convulsion, and specks of foam upon her parted lips. It was a frightful spectacle, the strongly marked, but withered features, and stony blue eyes of the miserable Queen.

But what needs it to prolong the description of scenes so horrible, the struggles of a soul which had used its greatness only to destroy ; and which, summoned to quit that world it had too much loved, shrunk from the contemplation of its past career.

No entreaties could prevail upon the wretched Queen to return to her bed, she raved, screamed, and wept at the proposal. Cushions were brought, and upon them she was extended, bitterly bemoaning her miserable fate, and refusing all refreshment and consolation.

Who does not know that for ten days the unhappy Queen thus remained, still refusing to enter her bed. The bishops, and the lords of

the council, alike in vain entreated her to alter this resolution. To Lucy Willoughton, whom she still detained in attendance, she expressed strong indignation against Secretary Cecil, the son of her old favorite Burleigh.

"He telleth the people, Mistress Willoughton," said Elizabeth, "that I am mad, but I am not mad; oh, would to God that I were!"

"Gracious madam, be comforted!" said Lucy, who was moved by the pitiable condition of the Queen.

"Do not thou mock me, fair dame, with such empty words," replied Elizabeth; "had thy poor cousin seen me thus, she had known me better than to talk of comfort! Alas, alas, why does her face still pursue me, God knows how bitterly I mourned her fate; but it cometh, it cometh for ever, and still accompanied by another, which my soul sickeneth to behold!"

While Elizabeth spoke, entered Sir Robert Cecil, with the lord admiral, a relation of the Queen, they came to entreat that she would suffer herself to be conveyed to bed.

Elizabeth looked round, shuddering at her costly couch. "Oh never! never!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Cecil, if thou hadst seen there what I have seen, thou wouldst not drive thy mistress to that couch of horrors!"

"What has your Grace there beheld?" said Cecil, "have you seen the dwellers of another world?"

"Nay!" answered Elizabeth, "assuredly that is an idle question, and beneath our notice!"

"In sooth your Grace must retire to bed," persisted Cecil, "if it be but to satisfy the affection of your people!"

At these words, the embers of an almost extinguished fire, again blazed in the heart of Elizabeth, and lighted up her worn features with something of the dignity of old: she raised herself on her cushions—

"Must!" she exclaimed, "is *must* a word to be addressed to princes? Little man, little man, thy father, if he had been alive, durst not have used that word. But alas! alas!"

continued the Queen, wringing her hands, and speaking in a tone of deep dejection, "thou art grown presumptuous, because thou knowest that I shall die!"

"Good madam, be comforted!" said the lord admiral, again approaching the Queen.

She again raised herself with Lucy's assistance, and grasping him by the hand, she looked piteously in his face, then bursting into tears, she exclaimed—

"My lord, my lord, I am tied with an iron collar about my neck, I am tied fast, and the case is altered with me!"

From this time the Queen gradually sunk, falling into a lethargy which released her from those mental torments, which it had wrung the compassionate heart of Lucy to behold, during this lethargy she was placed in her bed. As her end was now evidently fast approaching, the Lord Keeper, the Admiral, and the Secretary Cecil, were deputed by the Council to learn Elizabeth's will with regard to her successor. Lucy Willoughton, whom the Queen

during her intervals of consciousness, had commanded to remain near her, stood by the side of the royal couch. The Queen took no notice when the Kings of Scotland and France were mentioned by those lords; then they spoke of the heir of the house of Suffolk, the Lord Beauchamp, the son of Lady Catherine Grey, and the Earl of Hertford, to whom Elizabeth had always borne a strong antipathy. At this name she started, and the dulness of death seemed to vanish for a moment from her wild, blue eyes; while she fiercely exclaimed—

“ I will have no rascal's son in my seat, none but a king shall sit upon the throne of Elizabeth! and who should that be but our cousin, the King of Scots!”

She never spoke again!

THE END.

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